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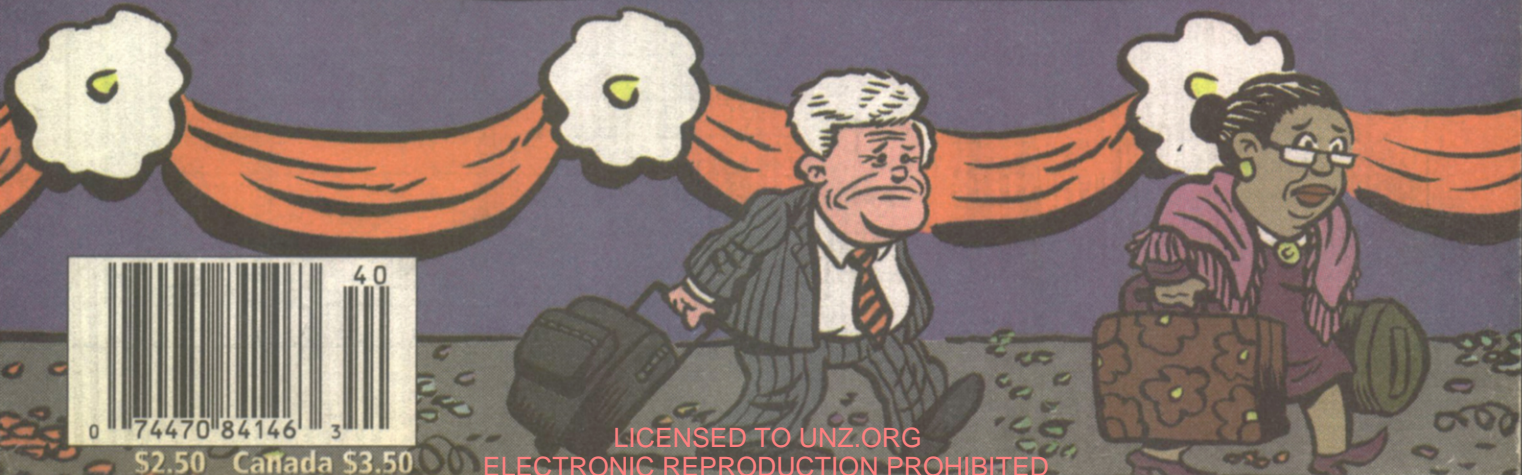
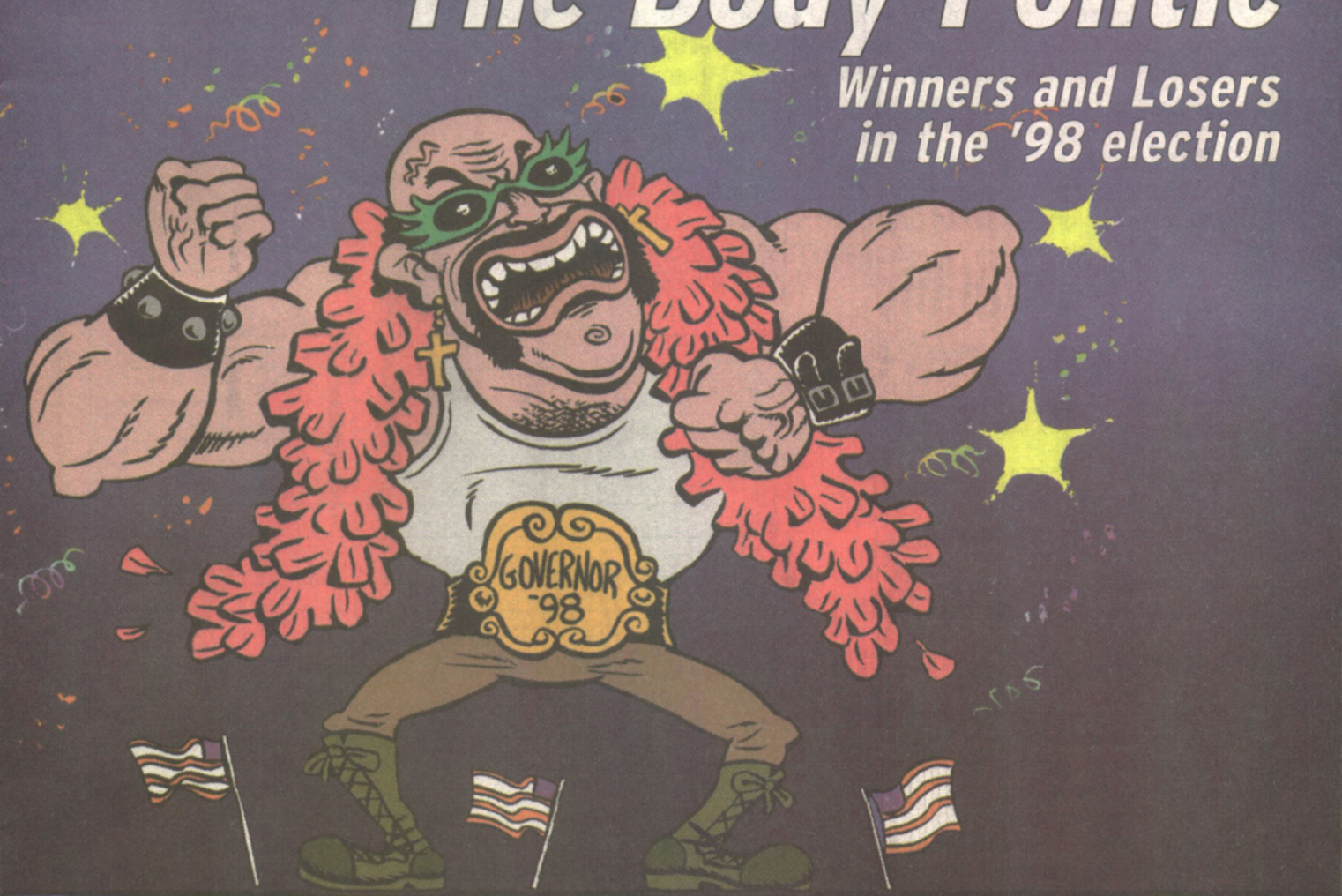
In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

December 13, 1998

The Body Politic

*Winners and Losers
in the '98 election*



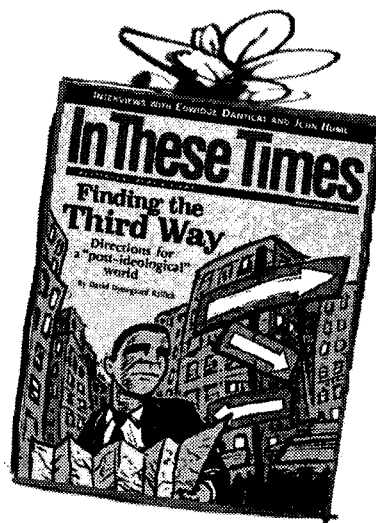
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Illustrator: Terry LaBan

Publisher: Paul Obis

Associate Publisher: Sonya Huber

Assistant Publisher: Rebecca Werner

Advertising Director: Patricia Gray

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Cover by Terry LaBan

Letters

Bars not Bards

In the whole "Back to Basics" issue (October 18), Jim Hightower's quote about the left needing to spend "less time in salons and more time in saloons" was probably the most valuable insight. It might also help if media outlets like *In These Times* were more accessible to people who hang out in saloons. Most of the articles included in your magazine are more likely to motivate the intellectual elite than the current public so frustrated with politics. Many of these individuals would probably enjoy *In These Times'* examination of current events, but who wants to wade through the vocabulary and theory in some of that issue's articles? "Back to Basics" is right, not back to grad school.

Graig Meyer
Hillsborough, N.C.

Mushy Notions

Too often it seems that debates in *In These Times*, and on the left in general, are carried on with such abstract terminology that we talk past one another, when we badly need to get ourselves better focused and organized. For example, in "Competing Against Ourselves" (November 15) Ken Brociner critiques some progressives who have couched their arguments for such things as education and training programs in terms of improved U.S. international competitiveness. But, do nations compete economically in any concrete sense?

National governments set ground rules by which firms compete and workers produce, but the idea that nations compete

is an abstraction that loses meaning when one tries to apply it to the real world. "National competitiveness" is one of those abstract, ideologically loaded terms, like "in the national interest" or "our national heritage" or "the economy," that we hear so frequently, and spoken with such passion, that we actually start thinking they mean something. Mainstream ideology thrives on such mushy notions, but the rest of us should strive for greater precision and clarity.

In concrete terms, firms and workers are engaged in distinctive kinds of international competition. Firms compete on the basis of the quality, availability, price, etc. of their goods and services; they can pursue greater competitiveness on the high road of innovation, or on the low road of exploitation. For workers, international wage competition, and wage competition for jobs generally, is a losing proposition.

The logic of trade unionism from the 19th century to the present can be succinctly put: Take workers out of competition! This logic extends to the international level. When workers organize and take themselves out of competition, firms are forced to compete with each other on the high road. Rather than "jettison competitiveness," we are better off understanding competitiveness with these specifics and a healthy class perspective in mind. Abstract language can easily obscure social realities. We should use language more critically to communicate with one another and beyond our own ranks.

Robert Lehman
San Francisco

Kent State Face-off

In the ongoing debate on our Appall-o-Meter graphic (*Letters*, November 1), response is running 3 to 1 in favor of scrapping the screaming face from Kent State. Readers have until the end of the year to vote. Here's a sampling of the response so far:

I have to concur (though perhaps not so vigorously) that the image of the Kent State girl on your Appall-o-Meter page is flatly inappropriate.

The way I see it, the Appall-o-Meter is a great device to demonstrate:

- a) the left does have a sense of humor
- b) the consistent stupidity and/or callousness of our opposition.

Bringing this heart-wrenching image into the mix lends itself to neither. Sure, Vietnam was stupid and callous. But it was also so much more: a colossal crime against humanity, an agonizing experience, a true horror story. This image just doesn't work.

Marc Levesque
Buffalo, N.Y.

Memo to Lee Hartman, re: Hartman's indignation over the new Appall-o-Meter graphic of the horrified student at the Kent State shootings:

Get over yourself! There are bigger fish to fry!

Hartman demonstrates, yet again, classic progressive gallows humor: How do leftists form a firing squad? They stand in a circle.

Darryl Tahirali
Lake Forest, Calif.



A Turning Point

In a fit of pique, after discovering that his re-election as House speaker was a lost cause, Newt Gingrich announced his intention to quit Congress at the end of the year. *Après moi le déluge*: Go ahead, he suggested, cannibalize yourselves; you'll soon wish you hadn't done this to me.

And thus ends the ascendancy of the Republican right.

This may sound like wishful thinking, but Gingrich saw the writing on the wall. The proof is in the election results. On almost every front, extreme right-wing candidates were defeated—some by startling margins—while moderate Republicans and more left-wing candidates did exceptionally well.

◊ In California, Democrat Gray Davis beat his ultra-conservative opponent by a 59 to 39 percent margin—a rare 20-point spread in the state's gubernatorial elections—while Sen. Barbara Boxer won by 11 points over her conservative challenger.

◊ In Vermont, Bernie Sanders received 64 percent of the vote, his greatest margin of victory so far.

◊ In California, Rep. Loretta Sanchez, heavily outspent by former Rep. Robert "B-1 Bob" Dornan, won handily. In 1996, Sanchez' narrow victory was challenged in a House investigation. This year she beat Dornan by 17 points.

◊ In New York, the long reign of the corrupt but talented Sen. Alphonse D'Amato came to a decisive end, thanks to long-time Brooklyn Rep. Charles Schumer.

◊ And in Wisconsin, Tammy Baldwin became the first openly lesbian newcomer elected to Congress.

All of this happened in a year when only 37 percent of eligible voters bothered to turn out. It was the lowest percentage for an off-year election since the '20s. Traditionally, a low turnout has favored the Republicans—older and wealthier people tend to be more regular voters. But this year, as an electorate disgusted with national politics generally shunned the polls, organized labor and African-Americans voted in relatively large numbers. This turned the tide in favor of the Democrats. In Alabama, a Democrat defeated Christian conservative Gov. Fob James because of heavy black turnout. Similarly, in North Carolina, black votes defeated Sen. Lauch Faircloth, and they were decisive in Mississippi, where Democrats recaptured a House seat. African-Americans also turned out in exceptionally large numbers in Illinois, where they tried to re-elect Sen. Carol Mosley-Braun. The effort was not quite enough, but the black vote made the race a lot closer than anticipated (Braun received 95 percent of the black vote and 37 percent of the white vote).

The relatively high turnout by union members and African-Americans reflects a new level of political sophistication, coming as it did in a year in which few Democrats inspired much enthusiasm. These were voters concerned about the Republican Congress and the damage it could do with an increased majority.

In an election characterized by disinterest, Minnesota stood out. There, some 60 percent of the electorate voted (compared to less than 30 percent in Texas), in large part because Jesse Ventura presented a fresh voice and a mostly progressive platform. Ventura didn't mince words. He opposed public spending for professional sports stadiums, promised strictly to enforce a 17-to-1 student-teacher ratio in elementary schools, said that abortion was a private matter and advocated the legalization of medical marijuana. A professional wrestler, Ventura joined amateur wrestler, Sen. Paul Wellstone, in keeping Minnesota on the cutting edge.

On the third party front, the good news comes from New York, where, as we went to press, it appeared that the Working Families Party, a labor-based fusion effort, had garnered the 50,000 votes needed to gain ballot status. The Green Party, with a ticket headed by Al "Grandpa Munster" Lewis also achieved ballot status. In New Mexico, the Green Party vote in the 3rd District dropped to 4 percent (from 17 percent in 1997).

**Gingrich saw the writing on the wall.
The proof is in the election results: On almost every front, extreme right-wing candidates lost while moderates and progressives did well.**

as Tom Udall recaptured that seat for the Democrats, while in the 1st District, the Greens defeated Democrat Phillip Maloof by taking away 11 percent of the Democratic vote.

Statewide initiatives also provided progressive voters with some satisfaction. Legalization of medical marijuana was approved in five states. Public financing of state elections won in Massachusetts and Arizona. Criminalization of late-term abortions lost in Colorado and Washington and assisted suicide was legalized in Oregon. But a trickily worded initiative to overturn affirmative action carried in Washington, and same-sex marriage was defeated in Hawaii and Alaska.

This year could be a turning point in American politics. The ultra-conservative right has clearly burned out. Little, however, will change until a viable left emerges from the ashes.

J.W.

Crude Aspirations: Arco in Alaska

By Jeffrey St. Clair

A 23-million-acre landscape in the northern plains of Alaska is the largest swath of undeveloped land in the United States. Yet few people, even environmentalists, have ever heard about it. Perhaps this has to do with the region's unalluring name: the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, or the NPR-A.

For such frigid terrain, the NPR-A is spectacular in its diversity. The untarnished Arctic tundra provides refuge for the 450,000-strong Western Arctic caribou herd, the largest in Alaska. Flowing north from the Brooks Range to the Beaufort Sea, the Colville River arcs its way through reserve, its cliffs and embankments serving as home to the largest population of nesting raptors in North America. Polar bears and wolves prowl the coastal plain, which is etched with hundreds of lakes, habitat for more than 5 million migratory waterfowl. Scattered along the coast are villages inhabited by Eskimo and the G'witchin, an Indian tribe who for centuries have built their culture around the migrations of the caribou.

The NPR-A, originally one of about a dozen Naval petroleum reserves, was set aside by President Warren Harding in 1923 to be tapped only in moments of national emergency. Since then, oil companies have never ceased arguing that just such an emergency confronted the nation, and that they should be allowed to drill into the oil trove, estimated at 20 billion barrels. Through the Depression, World War II and the energy crisis of the early '70s, the Navy held firm. The reserve remained intact.

But now the Clinton administration, backed by Alaska's rapacious congressional delegation, has moved to open this pristine landscape for oil drilling. In

August, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt gave the final OK. Waiting in the wings are four major oil companies—Chevron, British Petroleum, Exxon and Arco—who anticipate one of the greatest giveaways of federal resources since the development of Prudhoe Bay's oil fields in the early '70s. Of the four oil giants, Arco has been the most ardent in the push to open the NPR-A. Arco's



The oil-rich National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska provides refuge for caribou.

existing fields on Alaska's North Slope are adjacent to the Reserve and those wells are beginning to run dry.

Arco has long enjoyed a privileged standing with the Clinton administration. Its former CEO Lowdrick Cook even was given a birthday party at the White House. As a present, the administration has doggedly protected Arco's interests in Alaska. The oil company has earned its special position through lavish political contributions and a crafty lobbying strategy. Since 1996, Arco has poured more than \$637,000 into Democratic Party coffers, making it one of the party's top political sponsors.

Arco invests more than \$3 million a year to maintain its legion of lobbyists,

who skulk around Washington putting out legislative fires and carving lucrative new loopholes in the federal tax code. One such firm is Manatt, Phelps: Charles Manatt is the former chairman of the Democratic National Committee and a top fixer for the party. His old law partner, Mickey Kantor, was plucked from the firm to serve a variety of key roles in the Clinton administration, including a stint as Secretary of Commerce. Kantor remains one of Clinton's closest advisers.

What will happen to the estimated 12 billion barrels of oil scheduled to be exhumed from the NPR-A? Much of it may be exported to the Far East, mainly China and Korea. Two years ago, this

would have been impossible. A federal law required that the oil taken out of the Alaskan Arctic be used only for domestic consumption. But with oil prices in the United States hovering at record lows, the oil companies pressed the Clinton administration to overturn the two-decade-old ban—with scant attention from the U.S. press. Arco is well placed to capitalize on the situation since it has recently joined with the Chinese government to operate a major refinery in Shanghai.

The last hope to save the NPR-A may be a lawsuit recently filed by a coalition of environmental groups, which charges that Babbitt's hasty actions on behalf of the oil companies violated the National Environmental Policy Act by, among other things, failing to honestly address the harsh impacts that oil drilling might have on the delicate environment of the Arctic plain.

Sylvia Ward, director of the North Alaska Environmental Center, a Fairbanks-based group that has led the fight against the oil companies, says, "Drilling in this special place for oil that might be burned in China makes a mockery of the administration's claims of concern about both wilderness preservation and global warming." ■

Corralling a Chronic Corporate Outlaw

By Simeon Booker Muhammad
BALTIMORE

A strip of Highway 225 outside of Houston is the only thing that separates the minority, working-class community of Pasadena, Texas, from miles of chemical plants and refineries. The most notorious corporation in this industrial sector is Crown Central Petroleum. Pasadena's residents blame a 3-year-old employee lockout at the Crown refinery for thrusting hundreds of families into poverty. Local residents call Crown a "corporate outlaw" for taking away jobs, polluting the neighborhood and discriminating against minorities and women that work at the refinery.

Since 1996, Crown's two Texas refineries have fielded a torrent of charges ranging from racism and sexism to union busting and pollution. In October, the National Baptist Convention—with its 8 million members—joined scores of civil rights, religious, labor and environmental groups in a boycott of Crown products. Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, also is now looking into the allegations against Crown.

In addition to its oil business, the Baltimore-based company owns three large gas station/convenience store chains—Crown, Zippy Mart and Fast Fare—located throughout the Southeast.

The AFL-CIO called the boycott in November 1996, after the Pasadena plant locked out 252 union workers during a contract negotiation with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW). Now the boycott also addresses Crown's repeated violations of the Clean Air Act and a discrimination lawsuit filed by eight employees in Pasadena and at its sister plant in Tyler, Texas. There are some indications that the boycott is working. Crown's stock has hit a 20-year low; third-quarter profits are down 72.5 percent from last year, with a 25 percent decline in revenue. Management is scrambling.

The lockout began in February 1996. According to the OCAW, Crown wanted to cut \$2.5 million in labor costs by reducing its work force by 40 percent and outsourcing skilled jobs. Crown also demanded that remaining employees give up their seniority. The union refused to accept those terms, but planned to continue with negotiations. "They never came to the table to negotiate; they just wanted concessions and tried to change the whole negotiation process," says Alvin Freeman, a union negotiator who worked at Crown for 30 years.

"We believe that Crown wanted to force a strike," says Joe Drexler of the OCAW. "When they were told that there wouldn't be one, they took a 10 minute caucus and came back with a lockout. This is union busting."

A lack of opportunities for promotion had already made discrimination an issue. Before the lockout, about 35 per-

cent of the union employees at the Pasadena plant were black or Latino, with none in upper management. Locked-out employees say that all of the approximately 100 replacement workers are white males. "We're talking about workers rights and human rights here," says Richard Womack, director of the AFL-CIO's civil rights division and chairman of the NAACP's labor committee. "Crown arbitrarily locked them out and most of the workers involved are African-American."

Workers say the lockout exacerbated already existing tensions in a hostile work place. "We knew that racism was going on from the start but you learn to deal with it. You learn to go along to get along," says Danny Duncan, a 20-year employee.

In June 1997, eight African-American and women employees, both salaried and union workers, filed a Title VII class-action lawsuit against Crown. Plaintiffs say Crown supervisors at the Pasadena and Tyler plants routinely call African-Americans derogatory racial names and women are frequently harassed. Provost and Umphrey, the same law firm that represented the Texaco employees in their discrimination suit, has taken on the Crown case.



Appall-o-Meter

The In These Times Index of Indecencies

By David Futrelle

Last Wishes (7.2)

Famed Danish Prince Hamlet pondered poor Yorick's skull. Modern-day Dane Flemming Pederson drove his dead dad around on a motorcycle. After the recent death of his 86-year-old father, Pederson asked the hospital staff if he could be alone with him. Then, Reuters reports, "Pederson dressed the rigid corpse in leather gear, boots, a helmet and dark sunglasses and walked it out of the hospital. ... he strapped the body to the seat of his Harley Davidson and drove around Copenhagen for three hours, visiting his father's favorite spots."

Meanwhile, over in Shakespeare's homeland, the seventh Lord Newborough, an eccentric British war hero, celebrated his own death by having his ashes shot out of a cannon into a wooded copse on his estate. "The 18th century cannon burst briefly into flame, then recoiled for several yards down the hillside," London's *Daily Telegraph* reported of the recent ceremony. "It was the ending that Lord Newborough ... had wanted."

Joy Division (6.8)

Smile, and the world smiles with you. Frown, and you're out on your ass. In an attempt to encourage tourists to

visit lovely Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Union of Private Hotel and Restaurant Owners has declared "war against waxy faces" in the hospitality industry, voting to fine employees as much as

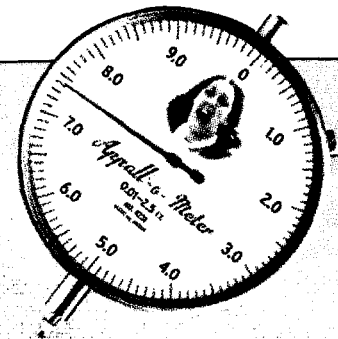


TERRY LABAN

300,000 leva (around \$182)—the equivalent of two months wages—if they're caught flashing visitors anything but a cheery smile, the Bulgarian news agency BTA reports.

Electrified (4.8)

Callers to Alberta's TransAlta Utilities customer service line recently got an altogether different sort of service: Due to crossed wires at the phone company, callers were



inadvertently connected to a 1-900 sex line. "Callers to the sex line, meanwhile, were disappointed when they reached the cheery voice of a helpful electric company representative, not that of a sultry woman purveying various delights in exchange for a credit card number," Reuters reports. A spokesman for the utility explains, "Certainly we're in the business of providing good customer service and customer service at TransAlta can involve a lot of things, but this is one thing it does not include."

More Work Rules (5.6)

Scanning through the gigantic budget bill that recently made its way through Congress, a reporter for the *Washington Post* noted an interesting paragraph stashed away on page 1,287, which suggested it might be a good idea for government employees to actually do their jobs. It reads, "Unless authorized in accordance with law or regulations to use such time for other purposes, an employee of an agency shall use official time in an honest way to perform official duties." Has anyone told Linda Tripp yet?

The plaintiffs have presented the court with several vulgar cartoons and handbills that allegedly circulated among management, including a "Nigger Application for Employment" and an "Application for a Piece of Ass," which reads, "Screwing preferences: How Often__ Pussy__ Ass__ Both__ Other__." Another handbill states, "Sexual harassment in the area will not be reported. However, it will be graded."

The eight plaintiffs represent four classes of employees fitting a pattern of discrimination, which they say dates back to June 1995. The prosecution estimates that 200 more employees could

qualify for the class action as the trial proceeds. "There is a possibility of a settlement," says Joe Sellers, one of the plaintiffs' attorneys. "But we are prepared to go to trial with the evidence. Hopefully Crown will settle, as was the case with Texaco." If no settlement is reached, he expects the case could go to trial in the spring.

The Houston-based environmental group Texans United says that pollution by Crown has increased three-fold since the lockout due to inexperienced replacement workers and the company's refusal to upgrade its facility. In August, the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission hit the company with

a \$1 million fine for excessive hydrogen sulfide and sulfur dioxide emissions, failure to report problems, and failure to maintain proper records. The fine is the largest in Texas history.

Boycott organizers say they'll keep the pressure on Crown for as long as necessary. "Now we have about 25 million members from our coalition efforts," Drexler says. "This whole thing has been difficult for hundreds of families, but we're going to win this. We'll last one day longer than them." ■

Based in Washington, Simeon Booker Muhammad is a contributing writer for the National Newspaper Publisher's Association.

Jury Whops Insurer

By Leslie Brown
RICHMOND, VA.

On October 26, the Richmond Circuit Court awarded a \$100 million judgment against Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company upon finding that the company had discriminated against blacks in the city. The judgment was the largest civil rights verdict in U.S. history.

The ruling closed the first case in the nation where an insurance company was brought to trial for redlining—the illegal practice of avoiding business in minority neighborhoods. During the two-week trial, the plaintiff, Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Richmond (HOME), argued that the insurance company restricted its target market to predominantly white neighborhoods, overcharged blacks for coverage and made race-based decisions in deciding whom to target for premium sales. "Nationwide was deaf and blind to its own obvious racial bigotry," says attorney Thomas Wolf, a senior member of the legal team that represented HOME. "The lesson here for large corporations is that if they don't root out their racism—conscious or subconscious—they may pay a heavy price for it."

This was not the first time Nationwide had been accused of racial discrimination. In 1992, The National Fair Housing Alliance conducted an investigation after widespread reports began surfacing that the company regularly turned down blacks for premiums. The group eventually filed a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In 1994, HUD began giving grants to local fair housing groups across the country to investigate racial discrimination by Nationwide and other insurance companies. HOME received three grants for \$1.2 million to investigate 30 companies in the Richmond area. Eleven testers—both black and white—were trained to pose as home-buyers and seek rate quotes for home insurance.

The testing began in June 1995. During the following 15 months, HOME conducted approximately 220 tests. The probe quickly began to focus on Nationwide. "We found problems in other companies but the most egregious was with Nationwide," says Connie Chamberlin, executive director of HOME and president of the National Fair Housing Alliance.

In 15 paired tests of similar houses, black testers seeking homes in black neighborhoods received only six insurance quotes while white testers seeking homes in white neighborhoods received 12 quotes. In the nine cases in which black testers were denied quotes, Nationwide agents told them their homes were too old, did not meet mini-

Nationwide denies that they violated state insurance regulations or federal laws regarding racial discrimination. However, company officials were unable to answer why there was a higher rate of blacks turned down for coverage than whites. Moreover, Nationwide had admitted in marketing documents that they excluded affluent, predominantly black neighborhoods, but included trailer parks that they determined were more than 90 percent white.

"The plaintiffs have not presented any factual evidence to support their claims against Nationwide," says a company statement issued after the verdict. "Instead, they swayed the jury by relying on insinuations and emotionally charged allegations which have no place in a court of law."

Nationwide spokesman Bob Sohovich says the company thought the facts were clear and convincing in the trial and maintains that the company has not violated any laws. "We are committed to marketing in all areas, including the urban market,"



To Nationwide Mutual, there's a difference between a black-owned house (left) and a white one (right).

mum value standards and that there was not enough time until the closing on the house to permit the required inspection. When blacks were able to obtain coverage, they were charged as much as 15 percent more for their premiums.

HOME also discovered that Nationwide targeted zip codes in the largely white suburbs of Richmond, ignoring those with a significant black population. Additionally, the investigation uncovered that Nationwide was moving all of its agents outside of the city of Richmond—which has a predominantly black population—into the white suburbs. The company justified the decision by saying they were trying to target people who were more likely to buy both homeowners and auto insurance policies.

he says. "We took this to court because we thought we had done nothing wrong."

Lawyers for Nationwide said the company will appeal the verdict to the Virginia Supreme Court.

In addition to the \$100 million in punitive damages, the jury awarded HOME \$500,000 in compensatory damages to reimburse the group for the cost of investigating Nationwide. "The ruling signifies a couple of things," Wolf says. "Institutional racism can be proven when it is laid out before a jury. The jury sent a strong message to corporate America that this type of corporate racism is not going to be tolerated." ■

Leslie Brown is a reporter and editorial assistant for the Roanoke Times.

Menaces to Society

By Craig Aaron

Chicago has become the flash point in a national conflict over what to do when police efforts to crack down on criminal street gangs run headlong into the First Amendment. On one side, Mayor Richard M. Daley and the cops insist they need more power to fight gangs. On the other, civil libertarians charge that most anti-gang measures are just an excuse to harass innocent black and Latino kids. Who's the real menace?

On December 9, the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the case of *Chicago v. Morales*, which challenges the constitutionality of a 1992 Chicago anti-gang ordinance. Under that law, "whenever a police

officer observes a person he reasonably believes to be a criminal street gang member loitering in any public place with one or more other persons, he shall order all such persons to disperse." If they refuse, they can be arrested, fined and jailed for up to six months.

Between 1993 and 1995, according to the September issue of *The Chicago Reporter*, police arrested 43,000 people under the ordinance. One was Jesus Morales, whom police targeted as a gang member for wearing blue and black clothes, the colors of the Gangster Disciples. He denied belonging to the gang, but was convicted and sentenced to a day in jail. He appealed, and the Illinois courts eventually struck down the law, ruling that it was "arbitrarily aimed at persons based merely on the suspicion that they may commit some future crime" and "likely to be enforced in a discriminatory manner."

"The right to be on the street, in public, and not have to justify your reasons for being there to the government, are at stake," Harvey Grossman, the ACLU attorney arguing the case before the Supreme Court, says in the October 27 issue of *Streetwise*, the Chicago homeless newspaper, which is becoming one of the city's most important oppositional voices.

The city, with support from the Justice Department, argues that the anti-loitering law is the only way to control those who "disrupt community stability, detract from property values, and intimidate their neighbors." "We don't believe there's anything in the Constitution that gives criminal gang members the right to loiter in public areas," says a spokesman for the mayor. "The First Amendment does not give gang members the right to terrorize community residents through their presence."

Others say it's the police who are doing the terrorizing. To track gang activity in most cities, police use criminal intelligence databases—which list "suspicious" people even if they've never been arrested. Once an individual is on a list, it's nearly impossible to get off. "The process starts at an early age with youth getting branded as gang members," one attorney tells *The Reporter*. "If they are stopped for a traffic problem or beaten up or anything, they are treated as a Gangster Disciple."

The Reporter's Danielle Gordon investigates the growing popularity of these systems, especially in suburbs. She finds, unsurprisingly, that African-Americans are targeted disproportionately. For example, in the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg between March 1997 and March 1998, 448 people were added into their suspected gang member database. Of those, 22.4 percent were African-Americans, who make up less than 4 percent of Schaumburg's population.

One of the few places that gang databases aren't allowed is Chicago, which,

under the terms of a 1982 consent decree, is prohibited from collecting or sharing the names of anyone who hasn't been arrested. This practice was outlawed after it was discovered that, during the '70s, the city's infamous "Red Squad" had spied on more than 800 groups—the Black Panthers, the Puerto Rican independence movement and, especially, the Communist Party—because of their political beliefs. Daley has filed a petition in federal court to modify the decree, arguing that the lack of a database hinders anti-gang efforts.

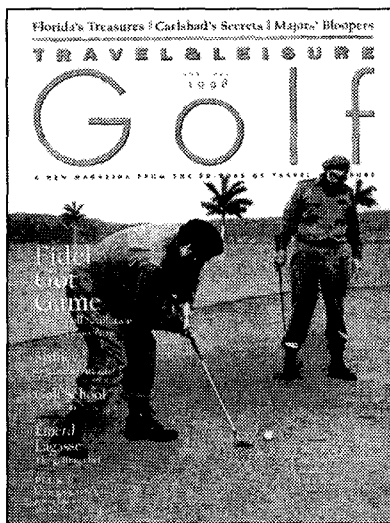
For A.K. Smalls, the Red Squad doesn't seem so distant. Smalls, 31, says his biggest crime is trying to organize public housing residents. Yet he's mistakenly listed as a gang member in the Illinois state police database. His affiliation? The Communist Party. "Tracking people this way criminalizes a whole generation," he tells *The Reporter* in a November follow-up story. "It should set off alarm bells."

♦♦♦♦♦

Over the past few months, this column has used *Time* for target practice. However, the magazine deserves praise for its gutsy four-part series on corporate

welfare. While the issue of corporate handouts has been well-covered in the left press, most of those stories lacked the scope, let alone the circulation, of *Time's* 18-month investigation. In the first installment, reporters Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele write that corporate welfare "represents pork-barrel legislation of the worst order. The difference, of course, is that instead of rewarding the poor, it rewards the powerful." Who ever thought a *Time* Warner publication would point out that

Fortune 500 companies "have erased more jobs than they have created this past decade, and yet they are the biggest beneficiaries of corporate welfare"? What's next, an exposé on media conglomeration? ■



Bay of Pings? "Four decades after Fidel bulldozed some of the world's greatest golf courses," a recent issue of *Travel & Leisure Golf* reports, "comes the counterrevolution."

Debt-free Jubilee

By Sonya Huber

Inspired by a passage in the Old Testament, Jubilee 2000, an international, grass-roots campaign, is pushing to free impoverished nations from their overwhelming debt. Derived from Leviticus, the "jubilee" concept asks the wealthy to free slaves, return land to its original owners and cancel all debts every 50 years. Jubilee 2000 wants the world's financial institutions to follow that counsel by offering a debt-free start for the world's poorest countries by the new millennium. The campaign is focused on reforming the policies of the IMF and the World Bank, particularly the 1996 Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative that offers very limited debt relief to 41 developing nations. Now active in more than 40 countries, Jubilee 2000 aims to raise public awareness and pressure Western leaders by collecting 22 million signatures on petitions by 2001. *In These Times* spoke with the group's national coordinator, Carole Collins, following their October conference and demonstration in Washington.

In These Times: You have called debt another form of slavery. What do you mean?

Carole Collins: The debt burden on HIPC countries is fundamentally unjust because most of these people never benefited from the loans contracted by corrupt political leaders in their name. Why should they be required to work to repay something they never had a voice in? Debt now is crushing the poor in these countries, and social services like health care, education and safe drinking water are being sacrificed as a result.

In the United States, there is a procedure for bankruptcy. A judge mediates between a bankrupt debtor and her creditors, determining how much the debtor should pay back. In the international world, there is no such mechanism. Creditors determine the terms for debt negotiations. Africa is currently paying twice as much on debt servicing as on health care. After World War II, Germany was expected to pay a maximum of 5 percent of its export earnings in reparations. More was considered

inhumane. Today, the IMF expects 20 percent of export earnings in loan repayment for many HIPC countries.

ITT: Won't forgiving debt be costly?

CC: Because HIPCs don't have the income to sustain debt repayments, most HIPC debt has a market value of 7 to 10 percent of its face value. Today, HIPCs owe their creditors about \$200 billion. The cost to the United States of writing off its share of this multilateral debt is about \$1 billion. Similarly, HIPC debt owed directly to the United States is \$4 billion, but the cost of canceling it would be under \$250 million.

We sometimes hear the argument that forgiving that much debt will destabilize world markets. But the United States has forgiven much larger debts with no ill effects to the global economy. We forgave \$7 billion of Egypt's debt after the Gulf War and \$635 million in Jordan's debt. Indeed, Great Britain still owes the United States about \$14 billion for loans from the Second World War. This points to the double standard in how we treat creditors from rich, northern countries and those from the south.

ITT: So, why isn't debt cancellation happening?

CC: First of all, virtually no poor countries can meet the stringent requirements set by the HIPC program. Of the 41 HIPC countries, only six qualify prospectively for any debt relief. These six must adhere for three years to a whole range of structural adjustment policies, including opening up their economies to the world market and slashing social services. By 2000, only two of these 41 countries—Uganda and Bolivia—are expected to actually see their debt level reduced.

There's also another reason: Creditors like the leverage that unpaid debt gives them over some countries. Swiss activists recently talked with private bankers in their country about how little it would cost those banks to write off the debt of several very poor countries. But the banks said they were not interested, because maintaining even small amounts of unpaid debt gives those commercial banks political and economic leverage.

For investors, it would seem to make sense to build educated populations and stable economies because these countries would become consumers. That's an angle that we hope to take up more actively with the business community in the months ahead. ■



Getting Creamed

Clockwise from top left: Laissez-faire economist Milton Friedman, upon leaving a San Francisco conference he organized on privatizing education, samples a creamy vegan delicacy. The involuntary taste test, orchestrated by the Biotic Baking Brigade, also recently has been taken by Monsanto CEO Robert Shapiro, WTO head Renato Ruggiero and San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown.



COURTESY OF THE BIOTIC BAKING BRIGADE

SMALL WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

A NEW INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT IS TRYING TO STOP THE FLOW OF LIGHT ARMS IN THE WORLD'S WAR ZONES.

BY JIM WURST

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Easy to use and readily available small arms like assault rifles and automatic handguns—which have killed at least 4 million people since the end of the Cold War—have long escaped any kind of international regulation. But taking a chapter from the international campaign to ban landmines, the international arms control community has begun debating how to stem the spread of such weapons and control their circulation in areas of conflict.

There is not yet a legal standard for what constitutes a “small arm,” but they are generally considered weapons that can be operated by one person, maintained with minimal effort and carried by less than three people, a light vehicle or a pack animal. This definition encompasses everything from pistols to rocket-propelled grenade launchers. Upwards of 500 million small arms are circulating around the world outside the control of regular armies and police. There are an estimated 2 million small arms in Central America, 20 million in Afghanistan and 90 million in Africa. Of that grand total, some 100 million are assault rifles, mostly Soviet- and Russian-made AK-47s or one of their numerous knock-offs.

Two conferences were held in Brussels in mid-October to address this crisis. “Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development,” an event sponsored by the Belgian government and Oscar Arias, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and former president of Costa Rica, marked the first broad-based strategy meeting on the issue. The conference, attended by

delegates from 59 countries and 200 representatives of non-governmental organizations, was an important indication of government willingness to tackle the small arms problem. But while the “Brussels Call for Action,” drafted by the Belgian government, was far-reaching in its recognition of various



UNICEF/4761/JOHN CHIASSON

Boy soldiers with rifles participate in a drill at the headquarters of a rebel Karen group in Manerplaw, Burma.

factors behind the proliferation and use of small arms, it came up short in acknowledging the governments' own role in creating the problem through arms exports.

In contrast, immediately following the governmental conference, the 200 representatives from disarmament, development, human rights and other groups held the inaugural meeting of the International Action Network on Small Arms, which focused, in part, on governmental complicity in the crisis. “The

availability of small arms reinforces a cycle of underdevelopment, conflict and violence," reads an excerpt from a working paper prepared before the conference. "To break this cycle, two types of small arms policies must be pursued simultaneously and with equal emphasis: those which address controlling or limiting the trade in and diffusion of small arms, and those which are directed toward reducing the demand for them."

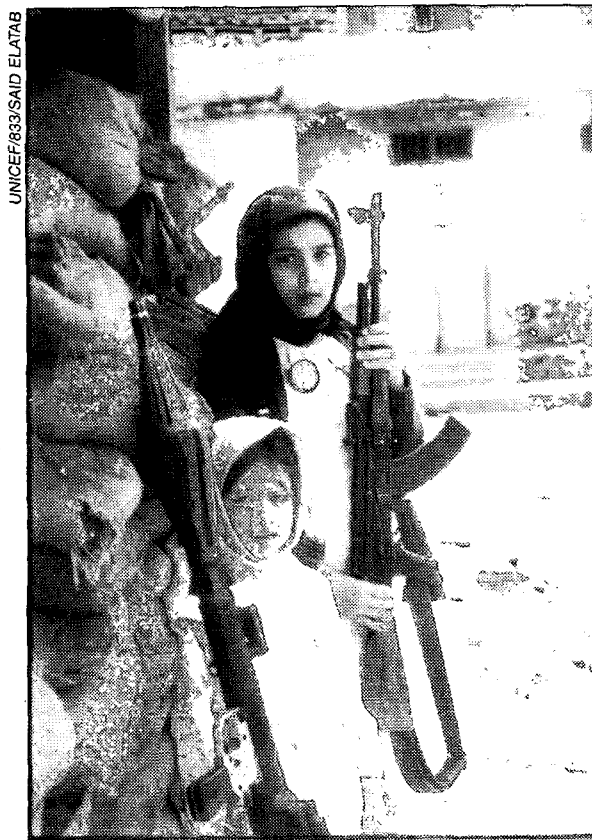
Conference participants challenged international leaders to recognize the direct link between the proliferation of weapons and hunger, oppressive economic insecurity and the hegemony of larger countries over smaller ones. In other words, says Kenyan Josephine Odera, "any discussion of small arms cannot be disengaged from poverty and good governance."

"The small arms control effort owes a significant debt to the international campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines. More than 100 nations signed the Ottawa Treaty banning mines in December 1997 and Jody Williams and the campaign won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Since then, movements working to create a strong world criminal court, stop the use of child soldiers (see page 22) and slow the spread of small arms have utilized the anti-landmine strategy of building cross-disciplinary coalitions and working with the governments of mid-size states. Recognizing that Russia, China and the United States are not likely to spearhead any arms control initiatives, campaigners have focused on smaller nations that support arms control such as Canada, Norway, South Africa, Belgium and Mali—which collectively make up for their lack of individual clout.

A difference in the small arms campaign, however, is that it appears the United States is playing a more constructive role than it did in the campaigns against landmines or the International Criminal Court, where Washington's main goal was to water down the agreements to make them palatable to the Pentagon. When the Clinton administration failed, it refused to support either convention. Yet, in a statement before the U.N. Security Council in September, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called the "uncontrolled flow of arms" a "dirty business [that] fuels conflict, fortifies extremism, and destabilizes entire regions." She proposed "full and timely disclosure of all arms shipments" to regions of conflict and a "voluntary moratorium on arms sales that could fuel these interconnected conflicts."

At the same time, the United States, in a position shared by many other governments, is concentrating on illegal arms transfers. This focus protects the interests of the arms industry by keeping the lucrative legal small arms trade in place and allows the United States to maintain its military and strategic options. In 1997, for example, the United States sold \$1.9 million worth of guns and ammunition to Guatemala and \$7.9 million worth of guns, ammo and



Two Muslim girls, one holding a semi-automatic machine gun, on a street in West Beirut.

grenades to Colombia's military.

Similarly, the Brussels "Call for Action" is heavy with proposals to "destroy illegally possessed weapons," "combat illicit arms trafficking" and convene an international conference on preventing illegal arms transfers. The United Nations also is considering three disarmament resolutions that deal with illegal arms. And there has been discussion of a ban on the transfer of arms to "non-state actors," meaning anti-government rebels. Taken together, these proposals free governments from responsibility and scapegoat forces, such as insurgent indepen-

dence movements, that have no voice in international deliberations. Implicit in these arguments is the idea that anti-governmental forces are never just, which conveniently ignores the reality of repressive, undemocratic governments. Loretta Bondi of Human Rights Watch says the emphasis on the illegal trade is "governments' way of saying, 'this is not our fault, it is the action of rogue elements.'"

This stance completely ignores the role of governments in promoting the illegal arms trade. Weapons that are first sold legally often end up being traded or used illegally. "There must be recognition of the tenuous, often political link, between licit and illicit arms trafficking as a source of abuse," says Alejandro Bendaña of Nicaragua, a former Sandinista minister who heads the Center for International Studies in Managua. "U.S. weapons provided 'licitly' to the Mexican and Colombian militaries end up being used 'illicitly' by paramilitaries against insurgent groups and civilian populations. An overzealous focus on illicit trafficking can easily lend itself to counter-insurgency."

Codes of conduct that prohibit the sale of arms to governments that abuse the human and civil rights of their citizens or wage war against their neighbors are one solution to this problem. A few arms-exporting countries—such as Canada, Britain and Belgium—already have national legislation banning exports under these circumstances. And the European Union has established the first such international code of conduct, which calls for the meeting of certain human and civil rights criteria. While it is voluntary and has loopholes, this code sets a valuable precedent. In the United States, Congress is considering the 1998 Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers. Sponsored by Reps. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) and Sen. John

THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

One of the most enduring images of modern tragedy is the famous photo of a starving Sudanese child—on her knees, head bowed as if in prayer—being watched patiently from a few feet away by a vulture, waiting for the inevitable. Horrifying enough as an isolated incident, it takes on even greater meaning upon the realization that the child's torture is not the result of an act of God but a deliberate political and military strategy. While drought certainly caused famine in Sudan, the various warring parties have aggravated the tragedy by withholding food as they see fit. Sudan is not unique. When this century began, 95 percent of all war-related casualties were soldiers and 5 percent civilians; today the percentage is reversed, and 90 percent of those civilian casualties are women and children.

What's at work here is a military strategy designed not only to break an opponent's army, but to destroy the opponent's society. The world's estimated 300,000 children soldiers are a logical, albeit immoral, tool of the trade. "The traditional limits on the conduct of warfare—international instruments as well as local injunctions

and taboos—are being cast aside," says Olara Otunnu, the U.N. special representative for Children and Armed Conflict. On October 20, Otunnu issued his first report on "the protection of children affected by armed conflict," in which he notes "a backdrop of increasingly accessible and destructive conventional weapons" and a "growing phenomenon of mass violence and social disintegration."

Otunnu, UNICEF, and the new Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (made up of human rights and religious groups) are advocating a series of steps to combat the use of children as warriors. The campaign, as its keystone, seeks to end the impunity of using child soldiers and add a protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Children that would raise the minimum age for soldiers from 15 to 18. Though the convention is one of the most widely respected international instruments, governments are resistant to raising the age limit. One of the most vocal critics of the idea is the United States, one of only two governments that hasn't ratified the convention. The other is Somalia. J.W.

Kerry (D-Mass.), the code would limit weapons sales to undemocratic nations and strengthen the current, easily evaded restrictions on arms exports. A far stricter code is being proposed by Arias and 15 other Nobel laureates. It would invoke a number of international human rights agreements and place much stricter limits on conduct. As a result, it has attracted few governmental backers.

Another way to limit arms trading, some argue, is to create international laws that curtail the practice. The International Committee of the Red Cross, which in the past has steered clear of arms control controversies, became a leader in the fight to ban landmines because it considered them a violation of international humanitarian law. In October, the Red Cross took that argument one step further, issuing a statement on small arms at the United Nations in October. "While we recognize that the primary responsibility for compliance with international humanitarian law falls upon users of arms," it reads, "states engaged in their production and export bear some responsibility for the use made of their weapons and ammunition. We encourage states urgently to consider the elaboration of rules, based on humanitarian law and other criteria, governing the transfer of military style arms

and ammunition."

Unlike landmines—which are easily singled out from other weapons—small arms, as one recent U.N. report noted, "cover so many types and uses that to ban them in toto is almost like



Guards holding bayonet-mounted assault rifles at a bridge checkpoint near Huambo, Angola.

banning kitchen knives." But while it may be difficult or impossible to ban certain small arms, outlawing their use in excessively indiscriminate manners could permit some measure of legal protection for the victims of small arms by holding accountable not only the users of small arms, but the

manufacturers and distributors as well.

Unlike nuclear weapons, which are in the hands of a few political and military elites, small arms permeate entire societies. Therefore, any attempts to destroy weapons in the field require dealing with the social problems under which the use of these weapons thrives. Jayantha Dhanapala, the U.N. undersecretary general for disarmament, told the Brussels conference, "I believe a program of 'deweaponization' of civilians and demobilization of former combatants, which currently faces nearly 20 different countries across the world, will be more sustainable when carried out as a part of a package containing community development projects to create more employment and generate additional income for poorer sections of society."

The regional and civil conflicts that fuel the proliferation of small arms, which leads to human destruction, cannot be discussed outside of the economic context of those regions. The income of the richest 20 percent of the world's population is 82 times as large as that of the poorest 20 percent (up from 30 times as large in 1960). "We are evolving toward a world characterized by economic apartheid," says Reginald Moreels, a founder of Doctors Without Borders and the Belgian secretary of state for development cooperation. "Poverty and social exclusion form one of the most important causes of armed conflict in the post-Cold War period. The damage done by weapons in general, and small arms in particular [leads to] direct human suffering, the destruction of the socio-economic infrastructure and the dismantling of the social fabric."

International conferences and declarations are one thing, but getting rid of the weapons that are already out there killing people is quite another. One of the most symbolic examples of small arms disarmament was the "flame of peace" bonfire in Mali in March 1996, when 3,000 weapons turned in as part of a national reconciliation pact were incinerated. This past October, Mali and 15 other West African countries instituted a three-year moratorium on the import, export and production of small arms. Significantly, the Africans have gotten the northern arms-producing states to respect the moratorium. This is the first such cooperative effort between northern producers and southern "consumers" of arms.

Many countries are still struggling with what to do after weapons are turned in. In Mozambique, for example, tens of thousands of weapons were collected in the early '90s, but none were destroyed. Since the United Nations left in 1994, the Mozambican Council of Churches has instituted a voluntary turn-in program, in which weapons, mines and explosives are swapped for farming tools, sewing machines and other products. The weapons are then destroyed. But the group has been able to collect only a few thousand of the millions of weapons around the country. In a more aggressive effort, the Mozambican Army and South African police have raided hidden caches throughout the countryside, destroying the

weapons they find.

Another problem is what to do with former soldiers after they turn in their weapons. In a process called demobilization, combatants are encouraged to exchange their weapons ("surrender" is a word never used) for money, goods (such as seed grain and clothing) and assistance in building a civilian life. This usually has been attempted within the context of a peacekeeping mission, but often the plans were poorly executed or there was no follow-up support for the ex-combatants. Consequently, the former soldiers got new guns, and returned to fighting as soldiers or bandits. Demobilization plans worked well in Mozambique and El Salvador, but were stunning failures in Angola and Liberia.

The challenge now is to turn these few deeds and many words into an effective movement. The small arms crisis must be confronted from both the supply and demand sides. On the supply side, the northern governments must stop looking at weapons as just another export commodity and face up to the devastation caused by their products. On the demand side, governments must correct the policies that breed despair and conflict. Nongovernmental groups like the International Action Network on Small Arms must apply pressure at both ends.

In more visionary moods, some participants in the Brussels conferences talked about a hundred "flames of peace," bonfires of weaponry lit simultaneously around the world. Given the magnitude of the small arms crisis, that day remains a long way off. ■

Jim Wurst is a journalist based at the United Nations in New York. He attended the Brussels meetings as a consultant on light weapons disarmament for the Council on Economic Priorities.



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The Great Divide

By David Moberg
CHICAGO

Voters want security.

Democrats can give it to them.

In this year's election, Republicans threw everything they could at Lane Evans, the progressive congressman from Western Illinois—attacking him for opposing “fast track” trade authority and blaming him for child molesters roaming the streets. But his TV anchor opponent's large war chest and tough ads were no match for Evans' service to his constituents, the heartfelt backing of local union members, or his stance as a fighter for Social Security, health care, education and a higher minimum wage. By a 52 to 48 percent margin, voters sent Evans back to Washington for a ninth term.

There were enough similar stories in November for the Democrats to frustrate Republican ambitions and buck history by scoring a five-seat gain in the House, while preserving the balance of power among senators and gaining among governors. Yet Democrats still control neither house in Congress and only a minority of state houses. They proved surprisingly competitive in the South but continued to be weak across the northern industrial states that should be their stronghold. This was an election, in the final analysis, that favored incumbents and largely secured the status quo stalemate in Washington.

Nevertheless, the political terrain has shifted slightly. As the post-election recriminations that led to Newt Gingrich's resignation demonstrate, the Republicans are less certain about their message and the electorate less enthralled with it. Republicans were divided over the wisdom of softening the hard-right agenda and frustrated by the ineffectiveness of the on-again, off-again moral crusade against Clinton. Some Republican “golden oldies”—railing against budget deficits, welfare, crime and military weakness—had either faded or been neutralized by Democrats. Yet just as Democrats had tried to stake a claim to “Republican” issues, Republicans hastened to neutralize traditional Democratic appeals. Both Democrats and Republicans claimed to be for better education, saving Social Security and protecting the rights of HMO patients. But with the exception of morality, voters seemed to trust Democrats to solve these issues that were most important to them. Absent a clear national focus, the election results can be read as a vague mandate for more “security” in an increasingly unpredictable world, though not for any particular solution.

Gingrich's replacement, Louisiana Rep. Robert Livingston, appears more pragmatic but no less conservative, and the “perfectionist” faction of right-wing Republicans that despised Gingrich has not disappeared. With Republicans in control of Congress, there will be little progressive legislation. Rather than accept flawed compromises, Democrats would be wise instead to define themselves clearly in the coming Congress as

champions of government action that provides greater security and fairness. This strategy could lead to bigger victories in both politics and policy in years to come.

The Democrats need to capitalize on the big divide between progressive and conservative visions. That divide springs from a major shift in American work life. Whether rationalized as a response to globalization or celebrated as “the new economy,”

corporate managers have shifted more and more risk to workers as the marketplace dictates more of social life and corporations demand flexibility for themselves. Many workers have emerged losers, but even the temporary winners have little security.

Compounding the insecurity generated in the market under the guise of flexibility, competitiveness and personal responsibility, conservatives promote government policies that shift ever more risk to individuals. The inevitable consequence of this strategy is greater inequality, increased hardship for the unlucky or powerless, and a declining sense of community. It is also, ultimately, a recipe for social instability and a less prosperous economy. Progressives hardly want to defend the status quo or fight innovation, but they constantly need to ask, who benefits? They also must stress that societies—and individuals—require some degree of

security to prosper. In the long run, greater security and equality will enhance individual choice and foster social cohesiveness and economic growth.

The question of security in a changing world will run through many of the debates in the next Congress. Above all, this will involve Social Security, the bedrock of decent social policy and the Democratic political lifeline. Last year, following Clinton's lead, Democrats fended off Republican tax-cut initiatives with the mantra of “save Social Security first.” This was a clever gambit with dangerous consequences. It assumes that Social Security is in imminent danger. The greatest threat to Social Security, however, is not a financial shortfall or the growing ratio of retirees to active workers. Rather, the danger comes from people who want to “save” Social Security, usually by cutting benefits or privatizing part of the program, when neither is necessary or justifiable.

In theory, government social insurance makes good sense. Even *The Economist*, which supports most privatization, concluded recently that “spending money on social insurance is not necessarily a bad idea. A minimal level of protection is likely to have economic benefits, encouraging entrepreneurs by limiting their risks and maintaining social harmony in hard economic times.” (Limiting risks also encourages workers, which *The Economist* did not acknowledge.) The magazine



Ding, dong, Gingrich is gone.

went on to recognize that "governments have a unique advantage" that permits them to avoid the inherent shortcomings of private insurance schemes.

At a practical level, Social Security in the United States is also in good shape, and likely to remain so until at least 2029, when projected payouts may exceed expected income from taxes and the trust fund that is now being accumulated. This long-range forecast is at best an educated guess based on the assumption that the U.S. economy will grow over the next 75 years at less than half the rate of the past 75 years. If the economy chugs ahead with only the sluggish pace of the past two decades, there will be no problem, even with a growing proportion of elderly citizens. Furthermore, even if the dire predictions are true, there is no need for panic. Minor adjustments in the future could resolve any shortfall.

The privatization plans involve shifting Social Security money into personal investment accounts, which would provide the main basis of retirement income. Proponents argue that individuals could earn more by investing in the stock market than the Social Security trust fund now earns by investing in treasury bills. But as recent stock market turmoil indicates, stocks go down as well as up, and some investors fare better than others. Privatizers' optimistic projections understate Social Security's stability and overstate the potential of privatization. Privatization, however, would enrich stockbrokers, whose lucrative fees contrast sharply with the extremely efficient government administration of Social Security. In any case, Social Security is a social compact, extending across generations, not a big mutual fund. It is only part of a retirement system that also relies on private pensions (albeit for declining numbers of workers) and private savings. Privatization plans would remove the security (and much of the social) from Social Security and exacerbate inequality.

The tilt of Clinton and several influential Democrats toward partial privatization is bad policy and worse politics. If Democrats want to claim that they represent working families, they first need to save Social Security from its "saviors."

Health care is another of the areas of great voter anxiety. Their worries include abuses by managed care organizations, the future of Medicare and the rising number of people without health insurance. Last year's fight over a "patient's bill of rights" will surely resume, and, in March, a bipartisan commission (with few liberal members) will report on Medicare. Many themes from the Social Security battle will recur. For example, there is likely to be a drive to halt rising government costs by replacing Medicare with vouchers that older people could use to buy private insurance. But if the value of the voucher is controlled, many people will find that they either can't afford insurance or there will be a two-tier coverage, with minimal care for the less affluent. Once again, abandoning comprehensive social insurance will shift risk to individuals, all to the benefit of private insurance companies.

Medicare will probably need more revenue from payroll taxes within the next eight years to cover the increased price of hospital care, despite recent cost control measures. But it would be a mistake simply to focus on fiscal issues. "Medicare for All," a

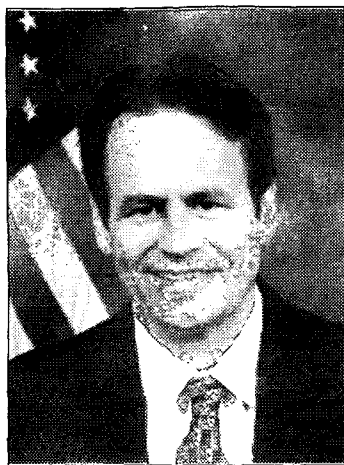
new national campaign organized by the National Campaign to Protect, Improve and Expand Medicare, which includes many advocates of single-payer national health insurance, argues that Medicare has been a great success and far more efficient than private insurance. Clinton was on the right track in recently proposing a modest expansion of Medicare coverage, but his

plan would be prohibitively costly for many individuals and cover less than 2 percent of the 44 million Americans without insurance. Why not expand Medicare to cover everyone and make the financing more progressive? This would make it easier to control costs, reduce waste and paperwork, guarantee patients rights and improve health care. It would also be familiar to the public, and thus partly inoculated against insurance industry attacks.

Meanwhile, as the world economic crisis begins to hit home, Democrats will not be able to continue coasting on the upside of the economic cycle. Foolishly agreeing that deficits are evil, soon they will have to explain to the public why deficits are desirable in hard times. They also will need to argue that government spending on energy efficiency, new high speed trains, job training, school repair, environmental protection and other infrastructure projects are not only ways of smoothing business cycles and making lives more secure. These are crucial public investments toward a more productive future economy, which could support Social Security, for example.

Democrats should push the Federal Reserve, the International Monetary Fund and other financial regulators to encourage growth and rising wages through easier credit for productive investment. At home, Democrats should raise the minimum wage and speak out against obstacles to organizing unions. Abroad, they should insist that all new economic agreements incorporate protection of core labor rights, especially the right to organize. If the Democrats fight for full employment and generous assistance for displaced workers at home, as well as labor rights and rising wages overseas, they will find workers less threatened by the international economy. But, to succeed, they also must demonstrate that their first allegiance is to the welfare of workers here. A good place to start would be by protecting steelworkers through temporary restraints limiting the recent surge of low-priced imports.

Education is another part of the security that voters want. Although elementary and secondary education remain mainly state and local affairs, congressional Democrats will surely push for more money to hire teachers, reduce class sizes (on the heels of the first steps taken this year), and repair schools and upgrade their technology (which Republicans blocked). They should also encourage retraining of teachers (not in technique as much as basic subject matters), as well as equalization of school funding. Head Start deserves to be expanded, with an eye toward making it a full-fledged child care alternative. In most cases, federal aid should be proportional not only to local needs but also to local efforts to adopt best practices, from small schools to greater parental involvement. Democrats must stress reforms that can shore up the weak points in the public school system, including public school



Rep. Lane Evans

Fighting Words

By John Nichols

MADISON, WIS.

Amid the rolling hills of Primrose Township in south-central Wisconsin still stands the farmstead of Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette, the most radical of America's turn-of-the-century progressives. As Wisconsin's governor and senator, and one of the most successful third-party presidential candidates in history, La Follette preached a militant gospel of opposition to corporate monopoly and the corrupting influence of special-interest money on American politics, along with unblinking support for the freedom struggles of women and minorities at home and dispossessed peoples abroad.

It has been a long time since the farmers of Primrose Township answered the Progressive call to arms. But when embattled Sen. Russ Feingold, Washington's loudest critic of special-interest politics, and House candidate Tammy Baldwin, an unblinking reformer who pledged "health care for all," raised the progressive banner this fall, Primrose Township rallied once more to appeals that, as in La Follette's day, were dismissed by mainstream pols as "too radical."



Rep. Tammy Baldwin

The residents of Primrose Township and surrounding communities voted by a 5-to-1 margin for Feingold and solidly supported Baldwin, scoring two of the most significant progressive victories of 1998. But the successes in Wisconsin were not isolated. Across the nation this fall, candidates who turned the tide against Gingrich conservatives did so not by offering warmed-over Clintonism, but by harking back to the populist appeals of a supposedly bygone era.

Feingold, who faced a visceral right-wing challenger who outspent him more than 2-to-1, railed against agents of influence and the politicians they purchase with campaign dollars. "Out of the Upper Midwest will come political reform, will come political change, will come the principle of one person, one vote once again," he repeatedly told his followers.

Baldwin, the first open lesbian ever to win a seat in Congress, borrowed less of the traditional rhetoric. But her issues were just

as radical, starting with a promise to battle in Congress for creation of a Canadian-style single-payer health care plan. When Baldwin gets to Washington, she undoubtedly will join the Progressive Caucus, which re-elected all 55 members who sought new terms. Some, like Hawaii's Neil Abercrombie, North Carolina's Mel Watt and Illinois' Lane Evans, who were supposed to be in serious trouble, won solid victories.

The caucus, which was founded by Vermont Independent Bernie Sanders in 1991, grew to a record membership of 58 members in the last Congress. That number should grow substantially in the next one, as more than a dozen new progressives take their seats—including Illinois' Jan Schakowsky, New York's Anthony Weiner, Texas' Charlie Gonzalez, Ohio's Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Colorado's Mark Udall and Oregon's David Wu—all of whom campaigned for open seats, as Baldwin did, with populist messages and strong backing from organized labor, environmentalists and women's rights groups.

There were fewer progressive breakthroughs in statewide races. But the Iowa gubernatorial contest brought a win that should serve as a model for progressives nationally. State Sen. Tom Vilsack, who ran with strong backing from organized labor and progressive farm groups, pieced together an urban-rural populist coalition every bit as impressive as Feingold's. Running on a platform that challenged the excesses of corporate farms and the abuses of health insurance companies that leave small farmers without coverage, Vilsack was written out of the running by pundits from day one. But on November 3, it was the Iowa Democrat—not Minnesota's Jesse "The Body" Ventura—who scored the biggest upset in a gubernatorial race. A wave of votes from farmers and meat packers, riverboat captains and Main Street shopkeepers battling Wal-Mart allowed Vilsack to end 30 years of Republican control of the Iowa governor's mansion.

Several hundred miles separate La Follette's Primrose Township from Vilsack's hometown of Mount Pleasant. But the new governor's populist rhetoric was not so far from that of "Fighting Bob," who declared during his last presidential campaign in 1924: "Our faith is in democracy. Upon that faith we enter this contest, ready to fight falsehood with truth, to confront the claims of privilege with the demands of justice, to restore the government of the American people and to establish economic freedom throughout the land." ■

John Nichols is the editorial page editor for *The Capital Times* in Madison. He covers national politics for *The Progressive* and is a regular contributor to *In These Times* and *The Nation*.

choice and charter schools, but they should fight against vouchers for private schools that would most likely erode rather than improve public education, heightening inequality and furthering social fragmentation.

Finally, if government is going to provide average citizens more security, then politics will have to be placed under greater citizen control. The votes in Arizona and Massachusetts for "clean money"—public financing of elections—and the re-election of Wisconsin Sen. Russ Feingold, who limited his campaign spending, send a signal to Congress that voters are serious about curbing the power of big money in politics. Democrats should abandon the money race with the Republicans—they typically lose and it undermines the party's core popular identity—and promote public financing at the national level.

Democrats held their own in this election largely because

of the mobilization of core constituents, such as union members, African-Americans and Latinos, even though Clinton has often stiffed these groups. According to the AFL-CIO, voters from union households went to the polls in high numbers and voted by a 71 percent margin for Democratic candidates. Defending public education, Social Security and Medicare is not only critical for Democratic loyalists, but also broadly popular with swing voters and even many conservatives.

Expanding the reach of these programs may be a promising progressive strategy. First, however, Democrats must be willing to defend these programs from dismemberment and privatization. Lane Evans has prevailed in nine elections in a once solidly Republican district by steadfastly defending the ways government can provide a measure of security. That is what many voters want from the next Congress as well. ■

The Body Politic

By Britt Robson

MINNEAPOLIS

Who says there isn't truth in advertising? The Jesse Ventura action figure used in television commercials during his race to become governor of Minnesota was a Frankenstein concoction that bore the head of an Omar Bradley doll atop the body of Batman. Throughout his improbably successful campaign to become the state's highest elected official, Ventura displayed the bold strategic acumen of a five-star general, while convincing voters that he could achieve the superheroic feat of vanquishing the villain known in his commercials as "Evil Special Interest Guy."

The national media has greeted the news of Ventura's stunning upset with predictably bemused condescension. That a former pro wrestler who billed himself as "The Body" and paraded around the ring in a feather boa should be elected governor was simply too delicious to go unmocked. On election night, NBC's Tom Brokaw wanted to know, "Do we call you Governor Ventura or Governor 'The Body?'" ("I've changed my moniker to Jesse 'The Mind' Ventura," the victor retorted.) And Leno and Letterman have been tossing out *bon mots* at Ventura's expense, even as their minions entreat Jesse to come and sit on the couch to boost ratings.

Three months ago, the vast majority of Minnesota voters likewise viewed Ventura as little more than an exotic diversion from the serious business at hand. But the brilliance of Ventura's campaign was in the way he reminded them how perverted that business had become. Eschewing PAC money, he declared, "I feel more ridiculous asking people for money for a campaign than I would in the ring with a feather boa." And his reason for entering the race—"The state is sitting on a \$4 billion surplus the career politician won't give back, while my property taxes have gone up an average of \$460 a year for four years"—offered an ordinary Joe sense of outrage that resonated throughout the state.

Ventura's opponents were the perfect foil for his anti-establishment message. Democratic Attorney General Hubert "Skip" Humphrey III, a decent nebbish with the personality of an actuary, was the bankrolled scion of entrenched, fat-cat liberals. Nearly every word that came out of Humphrey's mouth during the campaign could have been uttered by his more famous father 30 years before, only with far more passion. Republican Norm Coleman, the mayor of St. Paul, ran as a classic right-wing fiscal and social

conservative, a stance slightly at odds with his past as a dope-smoking college protester and, more recently, the co-chairman of Paul Wellstone's 1996 U.S. Senate race. (Coleman switched parties just a few months before declaring his candidacy for governor.)

While Humphrey had no imagination and Coleman lacked principle, Ventura was providing plenty of both, a contrast that became increasingly apparent when the three shared a stage during a series of five debates. After each one, Ventura's poll numbers went up. As the campaign unfolded, even Ventura's most extreme positions—he proposed a freeze on property tax assessments and pondered the possibility of legalized prostitution—crystallized his image as fiscally con-

servative and socially liberal, the political combo invoked by Reform Party founder Ross Perot during his bid to create a "radical middle" among the electorate.

But where Perot's personal eccentricities ultimately played out like the ravings of a paranoid billionaire, Ventura adroitly channeled his feisty populist iconoclasm. When station managers suspended his popular morning talk show in June, invoking equal-time constraints prematurely, Ventura—pointing to his own sacrifice—challenged Humphrey and Coleman either to resign their positions or cease campaigning during their taxpayer-funded working hours.

Exit polls showed that 37 percent of Ventura's support would otherwise have gone to Coleman, 29 percent to Humphrey, and a whopping 30 percent wouldn't have voted at all. And to those

who would dismiss him as just a celebrity icon for the ignorant masses, it bears noting that he captured a plurality of voters with college degrees, and led his opponents in every income bracket, save for those who make more than \$100,000 a year.

How did this happen in Minnesota, home of Vice Presidents Hubert H. Humphrey and Walter Mondale? Well, when Humphrey and Mondale were running the show, the state was 99 percent white and ethnic diversity amounted to Swedes and Norwegians. As the population changed, the fabled benevolence of "Minnesota Nice" withered. Nonwhites were isolated in crime-infested neighborhoods in "Murderapolis," as the *New York Times* dubbed the state's largest city a few years ago. Meanwhile, the farming and mining economies in the rural parts of the state went bust. Its cherished idealism in tatters, Minnesotans have become



Jesse "The Mind" Ventura

Third-Party Finishes

By Joel Bleifuss

However one interprets them, the 1998 elections reinforced the reality that, whether you like it or not, the United States is a two-party system. One of the few cracks in that system appeared in New York. As *In These Times* went to press, the Working Families Party had nearly garnered (upon a recount) the 50,000 votes it needed to gain permanent ballot status. The party may now be able to take advantage of fusion and place worthy Democratic candidates on its ballot line. The New York Green Party, under the banner of gubernatorial candidate Al "Grandpa Munster" Lewis, also got enough votes for their own ballot line.

The New Party, running candidates in six states, won 32 of 39 races for city council, county board, state legislature and U.S. House seats. In all but one of those 39 races, the candidates ran in nonpartisan elections or as Democrats. The party's greatest success was in Little Rock, Ark., where four New Party members were elected to the 10-member City Council Board.

Elsewhere on the third party front, the New Mexico Green Party again swung a House race. In the 1st District,

Democrat Phil Maloof, an uninspiring state senator whose chief asset was his family fortune, lost to Republican Heather Wilson because the Green Party's Bob Anderson took away 11 percent of the vote.

Green partisans argue that by contributing to the defeat of Maloof, the party sent a message to Democrats that they had better field progressive candidates—or they will lose. They can point to New Mexico's 3rd District, where left-leaning Democrat Tom Udall ousted right-wing Republican incumbent Bill Redmond. (Redmond was elected in a 1997 special election that saw Green Carol Miller take 17 percent of the vote—thereby denying victory to ethically challenged Democrat Eric Serna in this traditionally liberal district.) Udall's victory was made possible by voters who had cast Green ballots in 1997. Miller ran again, but she got only 4 percent of the vote.

This points to a schism among the New Mexico Greens. To the fury of some, Abraham Gutmann, a founder of the party and a former Green candidate for the U.S. Senate, publicly endorsed Udall. But Cris Moore, a Green Party member of the Santa Fe City Council, downplays the tension in the party and credits Miller's candidacy with pushing the Democrats further to the left. "The Greens are part of the equation now," Moore says. "If Democrats want to win, they have to appeal to our voters, just like they would anyone else. If Carol were not in the race, there would have been no incentive for the Democrats to address progressive issues." ■

uncommonly receptive—or susceptible—to bold new solutions. In recent years, they have elected Wellstone and Rod Grams to the Senate. Wellstone, arguably the most progressively liberal politician in Washington, was a college professor with no previous electoral experience. Grams, a Gingrich disciple, is a former television anchorman.

Now comes Jesse. And after the giddiness of election night, the hard part starts. At the moment, he is a mirror for nearly every voter with an unfulfilled hope or an ax to grind. Inevitably, preconceptions will be shattered by the unsatisfying compromises that keep government functioning. Ventura knows it. "I will make mistakes," he told his supporters on election night. "But let's remember we all make them and if they are mistakes from the heart then you don't have to apologize for them."

Most everyone agrees that the political system has broken

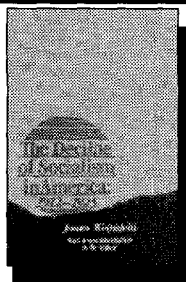
away from the principles and purposes we claim to hold dear as a nation. Yet when it comes time to cast our votes, we have either been too comfortable with the status quo or too fearful of what will happen if we really try and change it. The hundreds of thousands of people who voted for Ventura agree on precious few things, other than that he is a decent man with a happy marriage, a stable family and a suspicion of privilege that manifests itself on issues ranging from government intrusion on our civil liberties to his support for public education. Put simply, Ventura's supporters voted "for a change," a phrase that has been used so many times it is a political cliché. But this time, for better or worse, it really does herald something that feels brand new. ■

Britt Robson writes about politics and sports for City Pages in Minneapolis.

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Lessons from a Fall

By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

The defeat of Carol Moseley-Braun, the U.S. Senate's lone black woman, was less surprising than the narrow margin of her loss. During the past six years, she never established a defined political identity, either because her inept staff muddled her message or because she lacked one entirely. Due to that ambiguity, she was particularly vulnerable to her opponents' attempts to define her. The victorious campaign of Republican Peter Fitzgerald, a conservative Illinois state senator and banking heir, perfectly exploited her vulnerabilities.

Although the black voter turnout on November 3 was much larger than pundits predicted, it was not enough to overcome the enormous advantages conferred by Fitzgerald's wealth. The downstate Republican employed expensive political ads and quietly avoided public appearances, especially in Chicago.

But while Fitzgerald spent about \$12 million of his own money—outspending Moseley-Braun by 5-to-1 during the campaign's last weeks—his victory gap was just four percentage points—51 to 47. Still, the first Republican elected to the U.S. Senate from Illinois in 20 years attracted the majority of the votes of men, white voters, downstate residents and the more affluent and older members of the electorate. In her re-election bid, Moseley-Braun lost support among nearly all categories of voters except African-Americans.

Fitzgerald's stealth candidacy won by saturating the state with a series of hard-hitting television ads battering Moseley-Braun for her "friendly" 1996 visit with Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha and for a federal investigation into allegations of misspent campaign funds. Fitzgerald's relentless media attacks were so effective, polls were predicting a double-digit margin of victory for him just weeks before the election.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson played a big part in generating that large black voter turnout. His Rainbow/PUSH Coalition organized several registration rallies and, in the last days of the campaign, he used his considerable clout to pull together diverse forces of national political figures and state-based clergy and community organizations behind Moseley-Braun. "It was [Fitzgerald's] image as the savior versus Carol the bad person," Jackson said in a post-election

interview with the *Chicago Tribune*. "But when it became her record versus his, and we put together an infrastructure around the state, the gap closed radically."

Jackson's prominence in the successful effort to boost her numbers enhanced his role as a Democratic ring master. It has also revived speculation about his own presidential ambitions. But the fact that it took Jackson to provide the spark her campaign needed to catch fire with the African-American electorate perplexed and infuriated many of Chicago's black political activists. "Carol's senatorial seat was very important to the African-American community," says Richard Barnett, a long-time independent Chicago political strategist. "And, like idiots, we left her re-election campaign in the hands of amateurs who didn't understand the power of the black vote."

Barnett argues that the major failing of the Moseley-Braun campaign was that it did nothing to energize her base. "Her reason for defeat is easily diagnosed," he says, "she forgot her roots." Not only did the only black senator fail to campaign in the black community, Barnett notes, she also failed to cultivate the votes of those white feminists whose anger bolstered her initial candidacy.

Moseley-Braun first was thrust into the national limelight following the confrontation between law professor Anita Hill and Supreme Court justice nominee Clarence Thomas during his 1991 confirmation hearing. Widespread anger with the treatment of Hill by the all-white, all-male Senate Judiciary Committee provoked a political movement that turned 1992 into the "year of the woman."

Moseley-Braun, who was the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, was so moved by that spirit that she ran against incumbent Sen. Alan Dixon and attorney Al Hofeld in the 1992 Democratic primary. She eked out a victory by four percentage points and went on to defeat Republican Rich Williamson and to become the first African-American woman to occupy a U.S. Senate seat. Her victory, along with the triumphs of California's Barbara Boxer and Washington's Patty Murray, were regarded as feminist triumphs.

When first elected, Moseley-Braun said her highest legislative priority was to strengthen public education. She authored the Education Infrastructure Act, which earmarked funds for



Carol Moseley-Braun hoped for a victory ...

AP/JOHN ZICH

Get Smart

By Joe Knowles

The shifting political landscape in Washington has been the chief topic of discussion since the smoke cleared after election day. But at the local level, the election may have heralded a more enduring change in the physical landscape itself.

Green-minded citizens in eight California communities successfully campaigned for their local governments to join hundreds of other municipalities in the United States in taking a stand against suburban sprawl and dependency on automobiles. And Maryland voters re-elected governor Parris Glendening, partly because of his high-profile "smart growth" legislation denying state highway and school funds to "exurban" developments gobbling up the countryside. "Voters

expressed dissatisfaction with sprawl by defeating candidates they thought had done or would do too little about controlling growth," Glendening told the *Washington Post*. "That's a fundamental shift."

The phenomenon of the "urban growth boundary," pioneered decades ago by Portland, Ore., financially discourages—or, in more progressive places, outright forbids—developers from building in the open space surrounding cities. The idea is to promote compact, "infill" growth and preserve transportation infrastructure funds for mass transit and bike paths in the urban core. The practice, long a success in Portland, has caught on all over the country. Last May, the Tennessee legislature required all of that state's local governments to develop urban growth boundaries. And greenbelt initiatives are afoot in New Mexico, Arizona, Milwaukee, Salt Lake City and Des Moines, Iowa. Sixty municipal governments in Washington state have adopted such legislation; so have 15 counties and cities in the San Francisco Bay Area. And four of the eight new California greenbelts are in Ventura County in Southern California—the very birthplace of sprawl. ■

school construction and repair. She also sponsored legislation that eased tax burdens on student loans and added funding to bring computer technology into classrooms. First Lady Hillary Clinton often referred to Moseley-Braun as the "education senator" to emphasize her legislative focus. But she was also the big business senator. She broke ranks with labor unions in her support of NAFTA and she actively supported legislation that would benefit Chicago businesses like United Airlines, the commodities exchanges and even the Tribune Company (though the newspaper still endorsed Fitzgerald). Her support of ethanol subsidies earned her the title "Ethanol Queen." Still, she received a rating of 83 percent on labor issues by the AFL-CIO.

That range of concerns reflected the range of strategists consulting her. Administrative volatility was the prime characteristic of her Senate office during the first two years of her tenure, though it later settled down. Her initial campaign was lifted on the wings of popular passions, and while her handlers were often inept, she succeeded in spite of them. Her reelection campaign was controlled primarily by forces close to Mayor Richard M. Daley's political machine in Chicago and was much more poll-driven and cautious. "Her opponent was a downright reactionary on all feminist issues," Barnett says, "yet she failed to exploit his weaknesses. The man is against choice—even for rape and incest. Her campaign never even made that point, and most of the women who voted for him didn't even know his positions. But they sure knew all of her negatives."

Like other black analysts, Barnett condemns Moseley-Braun's "apology ad" in which she acknowledges mistakes she made but pledges to do better. With limited money for television advertisements, he argues, she should have focused on

Fitzgerald's negatives. "When she came out with the apology ads, people didn't know what she was apologizing for and began looking for her faults."

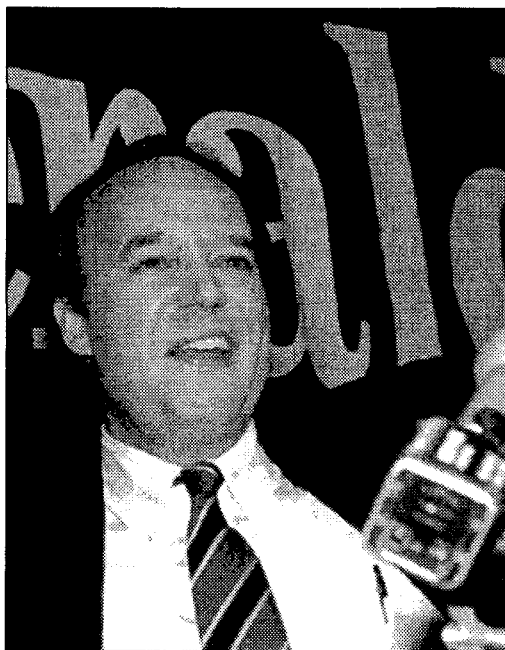
"Her handlers didn't know how to manage her image," agrees Robert Starks, a professor of political science at Northeastern Illinois University's Center For Inner City Studies in Chicago. "They couldn't decide whether to project her as a senator representing black interests, feminist interests or corporate interests. They just couldn't get her message out."

Starks says her voting record was very good and quite beneficial for her black constituents: "She was an excellent legislator who did some good work on banking issues, noteworthy stuff on education and had some real sensitivity to issues important to black farmers. Remember her courageous protest against the Senate's tribute to the Confederate flag? She's been ahead of the curve on many things, but we seldom got word on what she was doing."

But Starks thinks her handlers were a bit leery of allowing Moseley-Braun to be too closely identified with the black community. "They

thought she would be rejected by the rest of the state if she seemed too close to black folks in Chicago," he says. "And I can understand that reasoning; it's just wrong."

Indeed, one of the major lessons of the 1998 off-year elections was the increased currency of the black vote. In the late '80s and early '90s, conventional wisdom held that the black vote was a burden. In fact, many Democrats began to fear that their party's problems stemmed from its close association with black interests. Arguably, such fears spawned the Democratic Leadership Council—the centrist group once led by Bill Clinton—to craft a new image for what had been a



... but Peter Fitzgerald seized on her poor campaign.

UPHOLSTERY

Measures of Success

By Hans Johnson

WASHINGTON

Labor leaders were buoyant. Civil libertarians and drug policy reformers cheered. Gay rights activists saw some silver linings. Religious conservatives, however, found little consolation. Alternately lauding and lamenting the results of last month's elections, these key constituencies looked beyond candidates to discern messages from the tallies of hard-fought ballot measures.

Exactly 100 years after South Dakota became the first state to permit the statewide referendum, it passed an anti-corporate-farming constitutional amendment. Voters' verdicts throughout the nation brought smiles to many a progressive face. In mixed results on issues ranging from abortion rights to wage hikes, voters mostly endorsed liberal positions. The outcomes, which dealt setbacks to some pet causes of economic and social conservatives, marked an end to the right's 20-year dominance in initiative campaigns dating to the passage of California's infamous anti-tax Proposition 13.

No region had more closely watched November ballot contests than the West, where the referendum has become an oft-used vehicle for legislating on controversial topics and where pundits turn in search of national policy trends. Voters there did not disappoint proponents of loosening the nation's policies on pot: Five Left Coast states (Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Oregon and Alaska) approved use of marijuana for medical purposes.

By a 2 to 1 margin, Washington voters also approved a hike in the statewide minimum wage, yet they rejected (59 to 41 percent) state-sponsored affirmative action programs. Both topics are likely to appear on other states' ballots soon, with conservatives vowing to use so-called racial preferences as a wedge issue to divide Democrats, and labor activists hoping to wean socially conservative working families from the GOP with pocketbook appeals.

On social issues, Washington joined Colorado—home turf of mammoth religious conservative groups like Focus on the Family—in rejecting a ballot effort to ban “partial birth” abortions. Coloradoans did approve a measure restricting minors’

beleaguered party. But the past election season demonstrated that black votes have become a much sought-after prize.

African-American voters were 29 percent of Georgia's voters, 21 percent of those in Maryland and 19 percent of the Michigan electorate. Black turnout spurted in Illinois, North Carolina, Alabama and South Carolina and, according to David Bositis of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, it provided the margin of victory in several Senate and gubernatorial races. “There is no longer a stigma attached to black votes,” says Bositis. “Democrats used to try to divorce themselves from the black community but now they're rushing to renew their vows. And it's not just Democrats. The Bush brothers in Florida and Texas also actively sought black votes.”

Moseley-Braun was buoyed by the national upsurge of black voters, but it was too little, too late for her race. Starks blames her handlers, but Barnett blames the candidate. “Carol's been in politics long enough to know the necessity of firming up your base. If she wanted to do it she would have, regardless of her advisers.”

Barnett is closer to the truth. Moseley-Braun's failure to cultivate close bonds with any particular constituency left her

access to abortion; but they also shot down a religious-right-backed bid to offer tax credits to private and religious schools, giving pause to activists in other states who had pledged to pursue such proposals.

Voters in both Hawaii and Alaska approved state constitutional amendments to bar same-sex marriages. Court cases in each state had raised the possibility of legal gay unions, but a deluge of state and federal legislation already had preempted much of the potential impact of such suits. Elsewhere, religious conservatives—preoccupied with homosexuality—suffered setbacks. Iowa and Florida became the first states in a generation to approve gender-equity amendments to their state constitutions. Campaigns by anti-feminists like Phyllis Schlafly, who claimed the measure would lead to same-sex marriages—fell completely flat. The vote by Iowans also signaled a rebuke to Pat Robertson, who had railed against a previous bid on the grounds that it would turn women into lesbians.

Two other targets of conservative groups, state government and organized labor, emerged relatively unscathed from the balloting. Voters in Nebraska and South Dakota shunned limits on state taxes, though Montana narrowly backed a bid to require statewide votes on any future tax hikes. By the narrowest of margins, Californians actually approved a tax increase—of 50 cents per pack on cigarettes—to fund health and education programs for infants and toddlers. And, culminating a particularly ill-fated drive by anti-union tacticians, Oregon nixed a once-ballyhooed “paycheck protection” measure sponsored by losing GOP gubernatorial candidate Bill Sizemore. Branding the measure “paycheck deception,” labor activists won by 51 to 49 percent, replicating a come-from-behind victory in California in June against a similar referendum.

Finally, in moves amplifying the message of campaign finance reformer Russ Feingold's narrow Senate victory in Wisconsin, both Massachusetts and Arizona approved campaign finance overhauls, creating incentives for state candidates to limit donations and opening the door to public funds for state campaigns. The wins, on the heels of earlier triumphs in Maine and Vermont, give a boost to reform efforts in other states and the 106th Congress. ■

Hans Johnson, co-author of the *New Members of Congress Almanac*, reports on politics and religion from Washington.

without an ardent core of supports and more vulnerable to Fitzgerald's attacks on her character that, experts say, did her in. What's more, her early problems surrounding the shady dealings of Kgosie Matthews, her male companion cum campaign aide, fit the well-worn stereotype of a successful black woman being bamboozled by a hustling boyfriend, alienating some of her feminist allies.

She also alienated her core constituency by seemingly ignoring them. Moseley-Braun was seldom heard on black radio and she boycotted black Chicago's most influential radio talk show on WVON. She was seldom seen at el stops, grocery stores or any authentic communal gatherings in African-American neighborhoods—except selected churches.

Moseley-Braun was done in by the conventional wisdom that finds strategists using tactics from struggles past. Instead of avoiding the black vote for fear of appearing too connected to “failed policies of tax-and-spend liberalism,” she should have embraced it. The heightened currency of the black vote is perhaps the major lesson of campaign '98. Too bad black America had to sacrifice a senator to learn it. ■

Bah Humbug!

By Doug Ireland
NEW YORK

Don't be fooled by the resignation of Newt Gingrich: The new Congress is going to be more conservative than the last one. Louisiana's Bob Livingston, the speaker-to-be, is more of a true ideological conservative than the unfocused and egomaniacal Newt, who was always an opportunist at heart.

Arrogant and authoritarian, with a hair-trigger temper, Livingston is a devout Catholic who regularly consults the reactionary bishop of New Orleans on political matters. His election as Speaker will mark the successful completion of last year's failed coup against Newt, which was motored by the social conservatives of the Christian right. That it succeeded this time was due to nine months of careful preparation, and the threat by a half-dozen hard-right GOPers to break party ranks and vote against Newt on the House floor even if he had been re-elected by a majority of the party caucus. The blackmail worked, and Livingston is now beholden to these paladins of paleo-politics.

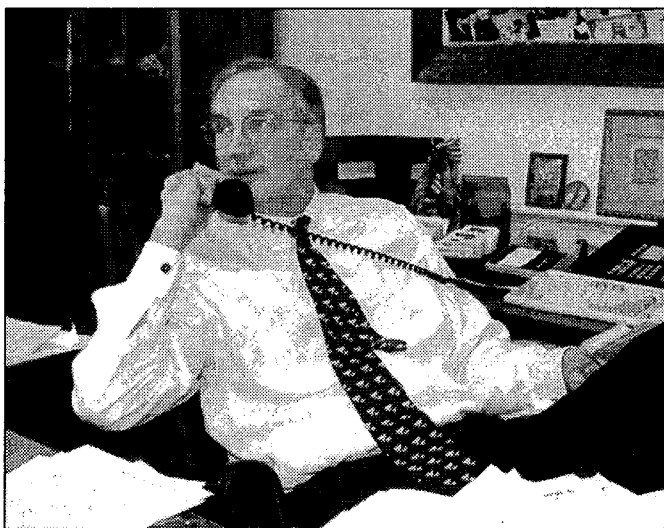
The election exit polls suggest that the most important vote this year was cast by Alan Greenspan when he cut interest rates another quarter-point—just enough to paper over the fault lines in the economy through election day. The more that voters perceived the economy as doing well, those polls say, the more likely they were to vote Democratic. With no clear economic message as a central theme, the Republicans saw their House majority shaved. But with a few notable exceptions, most of the freshman Democrats, especially those who won open seats, are neocon Democrats or Blue Dog budget-cutters like Kentucky's Ken Lucas, Mississippi's Ronnie Shows and Indiana's Baron Hill. In large measure, the retiring Democrats were more liberal than those who replaced them. (And the *Washington Post* has revealed that the key element in Dick Gephardt's plan for retaking the House in 2000 is a "southern strategy" based on recruiting more conservative candidates like Lucas and Shows, who are both anti-abortion and anti-gay.)

In contrast to Gingrich, Livingston is a skilled legislator who will use the working relationships he has built up with conservative Democrats over two decades to forge cross-party coalitions. In the current Congress there is a bloc of some 40 Democrats who frequently vote with the Republicans on economic issues and another floating group of 60 to 80 who vote with them on social issues, especially those targeting gays. Their ranks have now increased.

Livingston can be counted on to give primacy to economic matters, but as the puissant chairman of the Appropriations Committee he pushed through amendments to money bills banning federal funding for abortions and clean needle exchange. And while he may prefer to corral as many Democratic votes as possible and create a clear record of accomplishments for the Republicans to run on in 2000 by keeping budget bills free of extraneous issues, you can be sure that Livingston's back-room commitments to his soul mates on the Christian right include items on their social agenda. Thus,

early passage is probable for legislation like the so-called HIV Partner Protection Act, a bill co-authored by New York Democrat Gary Ackerman and Tom Coburn, a GOP religious zealot from Oklahoma, that would destroy the confidentiality of HIV testing by requiring that all new infections be reported by name, thus driving many of those in high-risk categories underground (which is why the Centers for Disease Control has strongly opposed this bill). And there's more to come.

The Senate, too, is more conservative, even though the numbers didn't change. Arkansas Democrat Blanche Lincoln,



AP/JOYCE NALCHAYAN

New House Speaker Bob Livingston

a Blue Dog, is succeeding the more liberal Dale Bumpers, while Illinois' scary Peter Fitzgerald and Ohio's George Voinovich are far more conservative than the Democrats they replaced. Even North Carolina's John Edwards, who defeated reactionary Lauch Faircloth, campaigned as a Clinton critic while praising Jesse Helms.

Most of the big races were decided by local factors: New Yorkers, for example, don't give senators or governors fourth terms, and they decided that 18 years of Al D'Amato was enough, especially when he ran an incompetent, entirely negative campaign. And while a significant gender gap carried many Democrats home, unless a mad zealot shoots an abortion doctor just before every election that may not hold in the future—especially in 2000, when the likely GOP presidential candidate is George W. Bush, who carried a majority of women in his re-election as Texas governor. Not only did exit polls show Bush trouncing Al Gore in two years, but a Gallup poll taken just before the election showed that, among Democrats, Gore had dropped 10 points in one month. Gore had been out campaigning in every major media market, so that says the more voters get to know Gore, the less they like him. That's bad news for Democrats as they prepare for 2000. ■

Anniversary Special #22

With this issue, **In These Times** celebrates its 22nd birthday.

A lot has changed since our early days. David Horowitz and Ronald Radosh have switched sides and are no longer listed on our masthead (they, along with E.P. Thompson, Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, Carey McWilliams and Herbert Marcuse, were among our original "sponsors"). Sidney Blumenthal, once head of our Boston bureau, is also gone from the masthead. Jane Fonda doesn't take out ads in the anniversary section any more. And **In These Times** no longer bills itself as "The Independent Socialist Newspaper."

Yet some things remain the same.

The need for a publication like **In These Times** is as great today as it was back then. We continue to adhere to the belief that any left political movement, to thrive, needs its own media to inform, educate and orient itself. Inspired by the *Appeal to Reason*, a socialist newspaper published in Girard, Kan., at the turn of the century, which reached an audience of hundreds of thousands, **In These Times** strives to provide "news and views" to the American left—liberals, progressives and socialists.

The *Appeal to Reason's* success was based in part on the fact that the paper's readers distributed, promoted and supported it. **In These Times** has also survived for 22 years because of reader support.

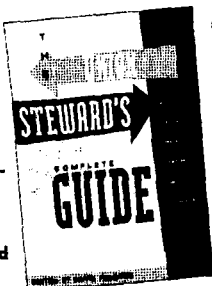
Each year at this time, we publish a section of greeting ads that demonstrates this support and further contributes to our financial well-being. The organizations and individuals listed in the following pages are among our best friends. As always, we are deeply grateful to them. We also express our sincere thanks to the hundreds of you who have contributed but are not listed. Without this support, **In These Times** would not exist.

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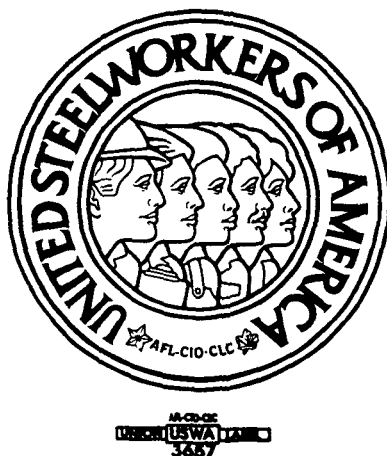
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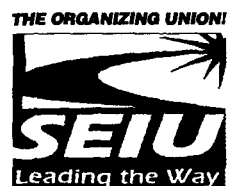
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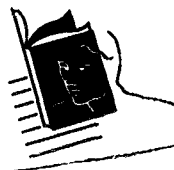
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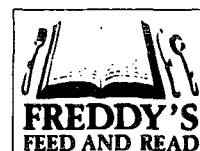
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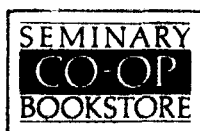


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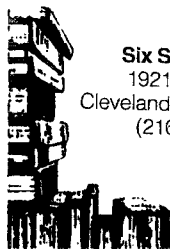
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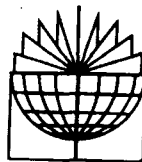
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On the Home Turf

By G. Pascal Zachary

Coming at the height of the world financial crisis, the dramatic rescue in September of a teetering hedge fund, Long Term Capital, was just the kind of crony capitalism the U.S. government rails against when it happens abroad. Columnists and members of Congress wondered how the Clinton administration, which orchestrated the bailout through the Federal Reserve, could so blatantly come to the aid of well-heeled investors under the cover of protecting "confidence" in the system.

The bailout raised fresh doubts about the morality, and indeed the survivability, of unfettered financial markets. To this, Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, economics writers for *The Guardian*, Britain's distinguished left-wing daily, would rightly say, "I told you so." In their brave and sophisticated book, *The Age of Insecurity*, the two journalists convincingly dissect the weaknesses of the neoliberal orthodoxy and point a way forward that questions the omnipo-

is poised for a comeback. "In an anxious age," they write, "people [turn] to the state for reassurances."

The return of the Labor Party to power in Great Britain might be expected to cheer Elliott and Atkinson. But

be checked and reconfigured" along national lines.

On the surface, Elliott and Atkinson might sound like European versions of Pat Buchanan, extolling protectionism and swearing that the domestic economy

MICHAEL SEXTON



Silicon Valley utopian Kevin Kelly (left), celebrates a globalism that British economics reporters Dan Atkinson and Larry Elliott deplore.

they are plainly disappointed in Prime Minister Tony Blair, who, in his first year in office, has continued most of the economic policies of his Conservative predecessors, Margaret Thatcher and John Major. On his very first day in office, Blair showed just how far he had moved away from old-fashioned populism by ceding to the Bank of England the politically-sensitive power to set interest rates.

For this and other reasons (such as Blair's acceptance of the "euro" as an inevitability), Elliott and Atkinson dismiss Blair as a globalization booster and Clinton-clone. Blairism is "a copout," they write, because it gives "the impression that all will be well if government—with the help of business—knocks a few of the rough edges off the laissez-faire model."

Elliott and Atkinson envision an expanded role for the state in this time of crisis. They favor a "big alternative," which they call "Green Keynesianism." Fair trade should replace free trade. Capital controls should curb speculators. The World Trade Organization should be abolished. The International Monetary Fund must be subordinated to the needs of individual nations. In summary, "the globalization process needs to

should serve its own citizens above all others. But this is a misplaced conclusion. Elliott and Atkinson are not left-wing versions of the super-patriot. They are disturbed, and rightly so, by the tendency of fellow progressives to believe that the contest for national power should give way to the pursuit of domination over global levers of power. "Globalist" progressives want to capture the mechanisms to effect international change; yet the reality is that the United Nations, international treaties and conferences such as the Kyoto gathering on global warming are no match for the power of multinationals, global speculators and even old-fashioned nation-states.

Elliott and Atkinson argue that the progressive preoccupation with building global power structures is a dangerous fantasy. They note, rather snidely, that this fantasy often arises in the wake of defeats in local or national contests. They see no reason why the left should fare better globally than locally. Drawing on the progressive experience within the European Union, they make the case that even when international structures are created, it's likely they will soon be co-opted by multinational corporations and captured by technocratic elites. It is harder—more costly and more political—

The Age of Insecurity

By Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson
Verso

312 pages, \$25

The Third Way:

The Renewal of Social Democracy

By Anthony Giddens

BPI

176 pages, \$10

New Rules for the New Economy:

10 Radical Strategies for a

Connected World

By Kevin Kelly

Viking

179 pages, \$19.95

tence of business and challenges "the myth" of the weak state.

Their diagnosis of the crisis is straightforward: "The new market system has not delivered the broad-based commercial and social stability promised." While this volatility increases suffering, it creates a host of opportunities for the left. "Big business is much more vulnerable than it would care to think," they observe. And government intervention

ly precarious—for elites and big corporations to win hundreds of small contests over, say, capital controls, than to triumph at the WTO in Switzerland.

The message they draw from this is clear: Progressives must fight the main battle closer to the people, on their own turf. The left's ultimate goal must be "to secure our national home and reassert control over it."

The *Third Way* is in many ways an answer to Elliott and Atkinson's reaction against neoliberalism. An elegantly written essay by Anthony Giddens, director of the London School of Economics and Blair's intellectual mentor, *The Third Way* admits that "neoliberalism is in trouble" and tries to chart a new path that transcends its limits and those of the older tradition of social democracy, with its stress on state intervention and mistrust of individualism and entrepreneurship. Giddens concedes that conservatives rightly criticized social democracy for its failings, but argues that these failings don't justify conservative positions on matters personal or political.

But in insisting on a "third way" between tired social democracy and neoliberalism, Giddens promises much more than he delivers. He sounds like a neoliberal himself, dismissing protectionism as wrong-headed and exhorting government to take a "cosmopolitan approach" to the issues of trade, immigration and national identity. He skirts the tough questions by calling for a "new" mixed economy without explaining how it would differ from the "old" one. One example of his fence-sitting: He says that social democrats shouldn't be so obsessed with inequality, but they shouldn't accept widening inequality as inevitable either. How to avoid this dilemma? Redefine equality so that "the cultivation of human potential should as far as possible replace" redistribution of wealth.

"Reinventing government certainly sometimes means adopting market-based solutions," he writes. "But it should also mean reasserting the effectiveness of government in the face of the market." Yet Giddens is wary that government may not win out against the forces arrayed against it. "We don't know," he admits, "if we will be able adequately to control the forces that globalization and technology have unleashed."

"Why even try?" would be the rejoinder of Kevin Kelly, a founding editor of *Wired* magazine and a techno-utopian whose roots stretch back to the American counterculture's embrace of personal computers in the '70s.

Where *The Age of Insecurity* emphasizes the contradictions arising from globalization and *The Third Way* tries to reconcile them, *New Rules for the New Economy* pretends they don't exist. Author Kelly insists that it is absurd to talk about controlling globalization and technology. He argues that information technologies—from computing to telecommunications to biotechnology—have already fundamentally altered the ways of business and life. Sounding decidedly deterministic, Kelly turns his faith in technology into a secular religion: "Because values and meaning are scarce today," he writes, "technology

**Kelly, technophile
and globalist, echoes
the Borg in *Star Trek*:
"Resistance is futile."
He's wrong, flatly.**

will make our decisions for us. We'll listen to technology because our modern ears listen to little else. In the absence of other firm beliefs, we'll let technology steer. No other force is as powerful in shaping our destiny."

And that destiny, according to Kelly, is to share the wealth. Positioning himself as the prophet of cyberspace, he argues that information technologies create so many opportunities for making money that virtually everyone will be rich someday. "Poverty is not what it used to be," he blithely writes. Kelly bases much of his optimism on a principle that he terms "follow the free." Simply, it means that both goods and services are growing ever cheaper and that many pathbreaking innovations will be given away. This appeals to Kelly's counterculture past, yet his glee over technology's presumed bounty slides easily into elitism. "Eventually technical standards will become as

important as laws," he predicts. When it comes to the power of information networks to reshape economics, society and culture, he steals a line from *Star Trek*'s Borg: "Resistance is futile."

In his airless scenario, the endgame for technological change is to create more wants and needs—and the means for humans to satisfy them. In Kelly's mind, many of these new desires seem quite trivial: better ways to shop for airline tickets on the Web or to connect suppliers with their customers; smaller cell phones; inanimate objects, such as toasters and T-shirts, that respond to human will through the combined power of microprocessors and wireless communications.

This explosion of desire might not be so bad if technology helped to achieve a new equilibrium between wants and needs. It won't. Nor will it heighten our appreciation for art and culture, or increase our appetite for human solidarity and community. In Kelly's own analysis, the very act of desire is corporatized and commodified. The only truth about the technology of desire is, he says, that "technology creates our needs faster than it satisfies them." In Kelly's vision of the future, products and services of the digital age will stimulate an insane amplification of desire. Pain of frustration and disappointment will always overwhelm momentary pleasures. And yet Kelly glories in this orgy of unmet desire, taking it to be the ultimate testimony to the human capacity for invention and entrepreneurship.

He's wrong, flatly. The "new rules" he revels in are nothing more than a description of the deepening of "the age of insecurity" that Elliott and Atkinson consider to be the engine of political change. Kelly accepts the postmodern creed that in life rules become apparent only after the fact; ethics are a construction of the elite and the powerful. Elliott and Atkinson, by contrast, are traditional moralists. They are existential enough to admit that "insecurity is intrinsic to the human condition," but they insist that the people, acting through the agency of the state, can impose a moral framework onto capitalism and its technological handmaidens. As they put it, "Business is not omnipotent and it is time for the myth of the enfeebled state to be challenged."

The debate between techno-utopians and critics of capitalism is bound to grow more heated in the years ahead. As the crisis of neoliberalism deepens, there will be more insistent calls to hand over the reigns of capitalist societies to technologists and efficiency engineers. These technocrats may endorse different flavors of market economy—French, Anglo-American, Japanese—but they will surely follow the thinking of Kelly by elevating specialized knowledge and the cult of innovation over hoary cries for equity and

democracy. As techno-utopians move to salvage the guts of neoliberalism, social democrats will be tested anew.

If the Blairs, Clintons and Schröders of the world cannot tame the runaway train called globalization, then the stage may be set for a more radical assault against the market creed—an assault that will draw inspiration from *The Age of Insecurity*. ■

G. Pascal Zachary is the author of *Endless Frontier: Vannevar Bush, Engineer of the American Century*.

society; on the tensions between scientific understanding and popular “dinomania”; and on humans’ relationship with the natural environment. (And the visual depictions of dinosaurs are eye-catching: This is a smart-looking book, as well as a smart one.)

The *Last Dinosaur Book* is ostensibly written for future explorers from some distant planet. Long after human beings have become extinct, alien visitors to Earth will be mystified: Why were dinosaurs prominently displayed everywhere, from museums to children’s bedrooms? Why were these animals so significant to human beings, none of whom ever encountered a living dinosaur?

Even though the last dinosaur keeled over tens of millions of years ago, these reptiles have become, according to Mitchell, the “totem animal of modernity,” the animal that symbolizes humankind’s relationship to nature in the 20th century. Far from “prehistoric,” dinosaurs are quintessentially modern. First, because their existence was unknown before the modern era, dinosaurs, unlike other animals, have no prior history or associations in human thought. Second, dinosaurs’ existence and their extinction both compel us to adopt a distinctly modern sense of time. The “Age of Reptiles,” which spanned tens of millions of years, prompts us to ponder “deep time” and to realize just how recent, how evanescent, human history is. But, because dinosaurs ultimately became extinct, they are also apt symbols of the ceaseless innovation and destructiveness that typifies advanced capitalist societies, in which technologies, styles and ideas are relentlessly consigned to obsolescence.

People have always used animals “to think with.” We ascribe a host of traits to other species, imagining that lions are regal, wolves evil, bees industrious. Because humans have never confronted actual, living dinosaurs, we have taken even greater license than usual in describing them. Scientific evidence about dinosaurs is, literally as well as figuratively, skeletal and fragmentary. Precisely because we know so little about dinosaurs, we project our hopes and fears onto them, and hang our ideas about our own life and times on their skeletal

Dinomania Dissected

By Chris Rasmussen

Triassic. Jurassic. Cretaceous. Paleontologists estimate that dinosaurs first appeared on earth approximately 230 million years ago, and roamed the planet for some 170 million years before becoming extinct. From the cultural historian’s perspective, however, dinosaurs have existed for only 150 years, since they were unknown until paleontologists first unearthed their bones in the

**The Last Dinosaur Book:
The Life and Times of a Cultural Icon**
By W.J.T. Mitchell
University of Chicago Press
321 pages, \$35

1840s. During this century and a half, we have marveled at these gigantic reptiles’ existence and shuddered at their sheer size and imagined ferocity. But because dinosaurs ultimately succumbed to extinction, humans usually have ridiculed them as the very embodiment of colossal failure. Slow-footed and dim-witted, dinosaurs were woefully unable to compete with smaller, but sharper creatures in the race for survival. Lumbering behemoths with brains the size of walnuts!

Is it any wonder that we disparage outmoded businesses, technologies and thinkers as “dinosaurs,” whose prior success has left them bloated and content to plod along in antiquated ways, oblivious as progress darts past them? The Ford Edsel. The Soviet Union. The typewriter. IBM. Aerosmith.

W. J. T. Mitchell, professor of English and art history at the University of



ROBERT F. WALTERS

Chicago, has written a fascinating account of the enduring impression these immense creatures have made on the American imagination. Dinosaurs, he writes, are “chameleonlike” in their ability to fulfill a host of functions in our culture. They are simultaneously “a scientific wonder, a children’s toy, a corporate logo, a voracious monster, a civic monument, and a synonym for obsolescence.” Mitchell examines a remarkably diverse array of sources—films, advertisements, science fiction, toys, cartoons, scientific exhibits—to make his case. Although he devotes ample attention to *Far Side* cartoons, *Jurassic Park* and *Barney*, this is not a book to be perused lightly, but a sophisticated constellation of essays on the myriad functions of dinosaurs in modern

frames. As Mitchell writes, the dinosaur's mute, immobile skeleton is a "blank slate on which every kind of collective and individual fantasy can be projected." Humans did not merely discover dinosaurs, but "invented" them and shaped them to suit our purposes. And we often use them to represent the "other"—dinosaurs stand in for aliens, enemies, monsters. Indeed, when dinosaur bones were first discovered, English paleontologist Richard Owen coined the word dinosaur—"terrible lizard"—which we now recognize as a misnomer.

These reptiles were not lizards, and most of them were not vicious predators. Most, in fact, were gentle herbivores, who did not instill terror in other animals. More typically, however, we use dinosaurs to represent ourselves. For most of the 20th century, dinosaurs have been emblems of failure—colossal, self-inflicted, deserved failure. They once stood atop the food chain, but stubbornly refused to adapt to new conditions, and so lost out in the Darwinian struggle for survival.

But who are we to reckon dinosaurs a failure? These beasts roamed, perhaps even "ruled," the earth for some 170 million years. It is safe to say that human beings, who first appeared only 200,000 years ago, will not enjoy nearly such a long run on the center stage of evolutionary history, and that reviews of our performance will be considerably less than flattering. Recently, in fact, we have begun to appreciate dinosaurs' extraordinarily long-lived success. Many scientists now believe that real dinosaurs were likely a good deal quicker, smarter and more adaptable than we formerly imagined. Although dinosaurs became extinct, their descendants, birds, traded scales for feathers, took wing and thrived.

According to Mitchell, our newfound esteem for these reptiles coincides with the transition from industrial to post-modern capitalism, in which adaptability, intelligence and information, rather than sheer concentrations of capital or industrial might, are crucial to econom-



A paleontologist's rendering of how dinosaurs might have evolved if they had not become extinct. *Stenonychus inequalis*, the most highly evolved dinosaur, stands to the hypothetical creature's left.

ic survival. While the Rust Belt has become the boneyard of America's heavy industries, upstart software companies flourish in Silicon Valley. Not surprisingly then, contemporary depictions of dinosaurs—the nimble (and mythical) "Velociraptors" scurrying across the screen in *Jurassic Park*, for instance—emphasize these reptiles' agility, pluckiness and teamwork.

Anxiety about our own impending, self-inflicted extinction recently has led many Americans not only to appreciate dinosaurs' success, but also to be more charitable about their demise. Especially since the dawn of industrial capitalism, we humans have heedlessly remade the earth for our own profit and convenience, often to the detriment of other species and the environment. Now, perhaps belatedly, we fret that we have wrought environmental destruction that may in turn destroy us. New strains of virus, pollution, global warming, famine—each of these specters suggest that we may soon find ourselves inextricably mired in a tar pit of our own making. Biologists warn us that we are witnessing (and hastening) an alarming

loss of plant and animal species. When other species are consigned to extinction every day, how long can *Homo sapiens* escape going the way of the dinosaur? We once despised dinosaurs for falling into extinction; now we are more sympathetic. Gazing upward at a dinosaur skeleton in a natural history museum is no longer a reminder of dinosaurs' failure. It is a kind of *memento mori* for our own species.

Mitchell predicts that the apotheosis of dinosaurs in the past few years marks "the last hurrah of the terrible lizards," the end of humans' unusually powerful fascination with these beasts, and that they will now slide into extinction as our cultural "totem." After 150 years of using dinosaurs to think about the development of modernity, it could be that we have wrung as much significance from their fossilized bones as we can. But I suspect that the end of the millennium will not spell the end of

dinomania. Scholars may herald a post-modern world, but many humans have only barely begun to come to terms with modernity, potentially catastrophic environmental problems and "deep time." Capitalism has accelerated exponentially humankind's ravenous, shortsighted exploitation of the earth's resources, but it also has proven extraordinarily adaptable, even "chameleon-like," and we would be lacking in foresight to assume that we were living at the tail end of the capitalist era, much less the end of history. Dinosaurs' massive skeletons will continue to provide us a place to drape our hopes and fears. They will also continue to inspire a mixture of curiosity, awe and foreboding. If those extraterrestrial visitors ever do explore our planet in the distant future, I hope they find a well-thumbed copy of *The Last Dinosaur Book* amid the rubble. But I also suspect this provocative book is not the last of its breed. ■

Chris Rasmussen teaches American cultural history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is completing *Automatic Age*, a history of coin-operated machines.

COURTESY OF THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE

Family Ties

By Pat Aufderheide

“**B**randing” is the buzzword of the era of media abundance. Branding is what cuts through “clutter,” the constant info-assault on media consumers. It identifies a media product not just as another stream of bits, but as something we would trust.

The Celebration

Directed by Thomas Vinterberg

Renegade Africa

Directed by Michael Davie

Branding is critical to movie distribution, at a time when there are far more movies than screens and still a fairly stable number of eyeballs. With the growth of distributors like Miramax, New Line, Sony Classics and October—all now wings of multinational media conglomerates—the very notion of what an independent film is has been given predictability, definition, a market niche.

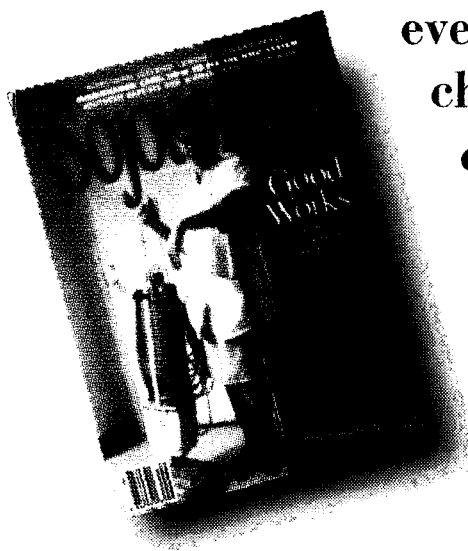
But what if you're a filmmaker who hasn't quite caught the eye of the conglomerate marketers, and, moreover, you're from a small European country noted for its relentless gentility? Then you could market yourself as a brand, and insouciantly call the move revolutionary.

That's what Thomas Vinterberg, director of *The Celebration*, the indie film *du jour*, has done. Along with fellow Danish prankster Lars von Trier, Vinterberg dreamed up a manifesto called “Dogma 95,” for the 1995 evening they supposedly invented the thing in a Danish bar. “Dogma 95” eschews visual or sound special effects, artificial lighting and genre formulas; it prescribes filming only in the here and now, with hand-held cameras and synch sound. To top it off, it calls for the director not to be credited, and promises “to refrain from personal taste” and other auteurist attitudes.

As a poke in the eye to multimedia money machines in Hollywood and to big-money directors like James (Titanic) Cameron, the manifesto has a giggle factor. As a set of criteria for filmmaking, it's both arbitrary and pretentious. Neither von Trier (*The Idiots*) nor Vinterberg has been hindered much by the manifesto's requirements, though—especially by the directorial credit clause. Instead, they've used “Dogma 95” to distinguish themselves from other indie filmmakers, and it has worked. *The Celebration* won a special jury prize at Cannes, which reflected (some speculated) general disgruntlement at current marketing fashions in Hollywood. And it was picked up by October, which upon its purchase by Universal had to let go the more sensationalistic *Happiness* for its depiction of the sexual abuse of children.

The *Celebration* tells its story through one excruciatingly long day, in which the staid, bourgeois Klingensfeldt family is honoring the sixtieth birthday of its patriarch, Helge. You know this is going

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to be the family reunion from hell from the start, when younger brother Michael, driving toward the inn, spots his brother Christian walking down the road—and orders his wife and small children out of the car to walk, so he can give Christian a ride. The rancorous atmosphere thickens with several servants-eye-view incidents of bad family manners.

The movie takes off once Christian, whose twin sister has committed suicide only months before in this very inn, offers a birthday toast to his father, and drops a bomb of a family secret. Thenceforth, the links between the sister's suicide, other children's problems and the father's behavior are forged relentlessly, revealing a horrifying and all too plausible family dynamic.

Family and friends constantly deny the significance of the revelations.

Deflecting while reinterpreting her children's messages, Mom finds the good news. Her surviving daughter, for instance, "has followed her own way" by bringing home an African boyfriend. Her older son, while battling a history of mental illness, has also demonstrated his creativity. The German in-law dementedly praises patriarchal tradition, as if he hadn't met its worst nightmare in Helge Klingensfeldt. Denial is built into every gracious gesture and piece of party gaiety. Ugly racist talk, foul accusations, whiny complaints, lascivious looks—all elicit the same Scandinavian cool.

So Vinterberg can be seen as making a statement about the perils of patriarchal politeness, a position that has ceased being much of a shocker. Or, he could be cleverly exploiting today's fascination with private crisis and public confession, bringing the Jerry Springer/Ricki Lake phenomenon up a social notch or two. What is indisputable is that *The Celebration* is extremely watchable, as a kind of social train wreck in process. It is executed with sassy, unforgiving wit, and has the atmospherics of authenticity. Hand-held camera, available-light locations and improvisational acting all make for a *verité* look and feel. The movie thus makes subtle as well

as bold claims for its unsparing honesty.

But the insights Vinterberg offers, with these techniques that promise us truth through technological puritanism, are predictable and shallow. Viewers are encouraged to sit in smug judgment on characters who are, by and large, either pathetic or self-deluded. Low-budget



Filmmaker Michael Davie with African youth.

filmmakers, TV producers and even documentarians have long exploited the observation that Vinterberg elevated to "Dogma 95": A documentary look is a way to bring richness and credibility to a movie, at a fraction of the cost of a major fiction production. Mike Leigh, with work like *Naked*, *Secrets and Lies*, *High Hopes* and many others, has made great contemporary art using such techniques, and has created memorable characters. Vinterberg, both with his manifesto and this film, has created a mere sensation.

While indie filmmakers are taking a cue from documentarians, documentary filmmakers have been elaborating on the personal storytelling mode. Until recently, public TV was just about the only place you'd find such work. But cable, with its gargantuan appetite for programming and its keen appreciation of low budgets, has begun to show some of this work. It's part of the struggle for identity, or branding, among sometime rivals such as Discovery, National Geographic and even HBO. They all need to assert their freshness while maintaining their distinctiveness. Nature programming is not enough.

National Geographic Explorer, a venerable show of worldwide adventure (diving for Titanic treasure; a scientist's passion for anacondas; an expedition to locate polar bears), will run in its half-hour "Journal" segment on November 29 and December 6 (TBS, 7-9 p.m.) episodes that some viewers might mistake for upscale MTV.

But *Renegade Africa* is more ambitious, and possibly the edge of a new era for National Geographic, a company that once exemplified a smugly imperial view of the developing world.

The film follows Michael Davie, a child of colonialism, born in what was then Rhodesia to parents who helped defend Britain's imperial grip on the country. After independence in 1980, the family fled, leaving behind, he says, "the servants we loved,

and the country clubs and golf courses we may have loved even more." He grew up in Australia, with magical memories of an idyllic past. At a rambunctious, rebellious, but still very preppy, age of 22, he took a camcorder and a backpack to Africa, to connect with "Africa's youth."

The resulting documentary, which took two years to complete, tracks Davie's adventures from Cape Town to Cairo, through fierce urban jungle, up mountain peaks and down deltas. He rides along with cops in Johannesburg, gets arrested in Zimbabwe, visits his grandmother, follows a 5-year-old Mozambican landmine victim's fitting for a prosthetic, and hangs out with the wretched-excess rich kids of Nairobi's black elite. He finds plenty of cause for concern and alarm, and also all the energy and hope of youth. This is not your father's African adventure story.

Davie never pretends to be more than a privileged kid in search of adventure, but what he's after happens to cross racial, class and geographical divides. That's a remarkable project, one that belongs within the yellow border—National Geographic's own brand identity—for the millennium. ■

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Dear Mr. Camdessus:

This is your lucky day. When I read in the *Wall Street Journal* that the International Monetary Fund was seeking the services of a public relations firm, I had to write you immediately. I know Hill & Knowlton and Edelman Public Relations are already high on your list of candidates. Not only are these firms dreadfully expensive, but they actually think the IMF has an image problem. I know better. The IMF has a reality problem. You aren't just a shadowy global power broker that ranks among the most unloved institutions in the world. You are a shadowy global power broker that millions of people loathe and mistrust for good reason.

Still, there's hope. The IMF may have upended the world economy and savaged the lives of countless poor people around the globe, but desperate times call for desperate measures. Follow my advice and the IMF will be in the hunt for a Nobel Peace Prize. I guarantee it.

● **Get a new name:**

Let's face it: Your name is mud. It doesn't really matter what you choose instead, but try playing around with the words "peace," "prosperity" or "beanie baby." Whatever you do, you can't lose by ditching the old acronym for something breezier.

● **Get a slogan:**

If you don't go for the new name, at least get a slogan. It's hard to believe that after 50 years you don't have one. You need a signature phrase that will stop critics dead. How about, "The IMF: Bankers are people too" or "The IMF: Not *that* bad."

● **Compose a theme song:**


Consider something that can get the hungry masses humming at night. Take the music to "What the World Needs Now" and modify the lyrics some: "What the world needs now is love, tough love, austerity not for some but for everyone. ..." Now the hard part is getting Stevie Wonder to record the single. But with the right production values, this could be the biggest hit since Elton John eulogized Princess Diana.

● **Hire a celebrity chief:**

Somebody famous should head the IMF. Now I understand this is the toughest hurdle of all because it means a big sacrifice for you personally. Yes, you'll be out of a job, but think: It's for the good of the planet. In a global financial crisis, the IMF needs a leader who exudes charisma—a dynamic chief who is instantly recognizable and a proven winner. Roseanne would enliven those dreary IMF press conferences. Or one of the Spice Girls could raise the fund's visibility, especially with the youth market. The United Nations has Ginger, you could nab Posh. Then again, maybe Michael Jordan should head the fund. That's right, the basketball player and corporate shill. Jordan is rich, well-spoken and could break down trade barriers like they were the Knicks' defense. And the timing is right. With the NBA players locked out, he's available. Pay him whatever he asks and watch the IMF's approval ratings soar.

That's it for now. Remember, I'm your man.

Best regards,


Z. Rascal Daiquiri

Continued from page 46

own positive-thinking homilies ("How to Succeed When You're Frantic, Frazzled and Stressed Out!"). The other gurus also recommend tape-listening, a methodology known in the success industry as "Lifelong Learning," which requires a hefty commitment of money as well as time. Tom Hopkins, "the number one sales trainer in the world," suggests that we "turn cars into classrooms" with his \$350 line of products. Legendary salesman and motivator Zig Ziglar urges us to attend his "Automobile University" for a whole range of course offerings, including "Career and Family," with a 30 minute sex education segment, and a 6-tape album titled *Christian Motivation* (tuition \$1,595).

That these motivational "libraries" are mere compendia of feel-good bromides is precisely the point, Ziglar acknowledges, as he offers us a biochemical rationale for their effectiveness. It turns out that scientists who analyzed blood samples taken from audience members at Ziglar's lectures found that levels of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine, dopamine and serotonin ("the feel-good-about-yourself neurotransmitter") had risen by up to 300 percent. This excess, moreover, is stored in "minute blisters" in the nerve cell. Thus the high you get from "saturating your mind" with Ziglar's pep-talks persists in the form of stored neurotransmitters, providing you with a reservoir of "mental and emotional energy" you can draw on to ward off stress.

You're going to need that reservoir, because true success, according to the experts, is a truly arduous undertaking, requiring unlimited achievement in every facet of existence—career, money, health, family relationships, spiritual growth. Since "everything is connected," no dimension of success can be slighted; yet the difficulty of juggling them all forms the basis of our need for success expertise. That the quest for success might involve trade-offs between irreconcilable demands is a possibility that is both denied and harped upon by the speakers. Ziglar begins his talk with a cautionary tale about a man who jeopardizes his marriage by putting in too many hours at the office, and then ends it with a warning that we might be missing out on promotions that we could get if we would "just hold steady, work a little harder." This insistence that we balance family togetherness with workaholism is typical of the seminars' project of exacerbating the contradictions inherent in the psychology of success, the better to keep us in the market for solutions to our agonizing time-management dilemmas. Complacency and despair being the twin obstacles to the purchase of motivational materials, Success '98 tries to keep us poised in a dynamic tension between hope and dissatisfaction, self-affirmation and self-loathing. Yes, we can lead contented lives, but only if they are suffused with unfulfilled ambitions that compel us to take risks, embrace "change" and "dream crazy dreams."

To this end, all the speakers emphasize the importance of setting goals, with many offering workbook exercises that elaborate the process into the writing of a full-blown mission statement. The goals themselves (or rather, "goals programs") are usually quite arbitrary. Lowe's *Success Yearbook* extols one John Goddard, who as a boy of 15 wrote out a list of 127 goals—including "Dive in a submarine" and "Read the entire

Encyclopedia Britannica"—and managed to check off 105 of them by the age of 65; it goes on to tout Lowe's own accomplishments in sky diving and bungee jumping.

All of this brings to mind the distinction made by sociologist David Riesman between the inner-directed personality, whose integrity and autonomy comes from strongly held internal values, and the other-directed personality, whose self-esteem depends on approval and acceptance from those around him. A celebration of pure, contentless self-actualizing, the mania for goal-setting gets at the crux of success ideology. It expresses the yearning for a more inner-directed consciousness, a yearning that reflects the deep links between the success industry and the fields of sales and marketing, those bellwethers of our evermore other-directed economy. In ages past, people could directly perceive success in the burgeoning fruits of their labor, which took the palpable form of acres cleared, bushels harvested,

horseshoes forged or trackage laid. Nowadays, in an economy centered around the diffuse provisioning of intangible services, the emblematic figure is the salesman, who measures success solely in terms of "customer satisfaction," sallying forth each day to try to soften the stony mask of consumer indifference.

The audience at a Success '98 seminar is acutely sensitive to the psychic travails of salesmanship, which are a commonplace of motivational folklore. Sales trainer Hopkins draws gales of nervous laughter with his depiction of "the submarine"—the salesman who stays submerged in the office out of fear of meeting clients—and "the road warrior," who is always "driving, driving, driving ... you can't reject me in my car." In this context, self-imposed goal-setting—the bravely optimistic sales quota, the framed mission statement that one bleakly gazes at after the hundredth cold call of the day—gives the illusion of independence to a life that is so abjectly dependent on the emotional responses of others.

Ironically, the success movement promotes inner-directedness by the most patently other-directed means: through celebrity hero worship and the rush hour consumption of pre-recorded platitudes. Zig Ziglar follows the logic to its endpoint by urging us to give ourselves daily pep-talks designed to transform negative feelings into positive thinking. In this "life-changing procedure," Zig instructs us to stand in front of a mirror and recite out loud, "with passion and enthusiasm," a long and tedious auto-encomium, one small fragment of which reads, "I am a supportive, giving and forgiving, clean, kind, unselfish, affectionate, loving, family-oriented human being and I am a sincere and open-minded good listener who is trustworthy." In this exercise, it is as if our internal monologues themselves could no longer register unless externalized to mimic the longed-for testimonial from a satisfied customer or grateful boss.

In this almost parodic sketch of divided consciousness, we see the real message of the success industry, which knows full well that there's no profit to be had from gaining the whole world if we thereby lose our own souls. The profit comes from selling those souls right back to us. ■

There is a consensus on what it means to be a success authority: You (1) used to be a salesman and (2) have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

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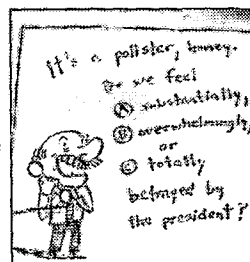
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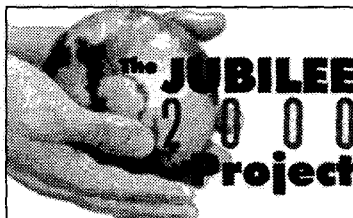
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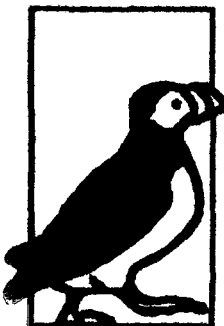
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The Secret of Their Success

By Bill Boisvert

Nothing succeeds like failure.

Christopher Reeve is proof of it, having transcended near total paralysis to regain the limelight as a busy director, best-selling author, sought-after speaker and advocate for the disabled. Only a few years ago, Reeve's career languished. He was forced to make do with bit parts in Merchant-Ivory productions, his starring roles in *Superman* blockbusters only a fading memory. There is a divide between Success in the '70s and Success in the '90s, an inexplicable cultural barrier that separates the Mark Hamills from the Harrison Fords, and Reeve spent many years on the wrong side of that wall. Until, one day, his horse jumped over it.

And so he became a poster child for Success '98, a traveling series of day-long seminar extravaganzas of hope and encouragement. Reeve shared the stage recently at a Success '98 gathering in Chicago with Maya Angelou, Colin Powell, Elizabeth Dole and Chicago Bears great Walter Payton, all of whom rounded out the program with plentiful tales of racism overcome, stage fright faced down and rejection dealt with constructively.

Success '98 is the brainchild of Peter Lowe, an ex-computer salesman and son of Anglican missionaries who calls himself "The Success Authority." Run by his nonprofit organization, Peter Lowe International, Success '98 is billed as the most popular business seminar series in the country, a claim that's easy to believe looking at the 13,000 mostly middle-aged professionals and managers packed into Chicago's United Center arena. Lowe himself is an uncharismatic man with bright orange hair, bulging eyes and a nasal, whinnying voice. Aside from some press-packet hyperbole (he was

apparently named "The Most Admired Man of the Decade" by something called the American Biographical Institute), he hasn't developed the sort of fire-walking cult of personality that other success vendors nurture. Instead, he seems to be a front man for an entire consortium of motivational gurus who, in between the celebrity speeches, give their own stage presentations and hawk their individual lines of books, tapes, thought-for-the-day planners, exercise programs and sales props.

The central theme of the Success '98 seminars is that success, far from being a random misstep in the steeplechase of life, is a coherent strategy, a diagrammable interplay of goal-setting, attitude adjustment, networking and prayer. But the sheer eclecticism of the speaker list—actor, poet, athlete, soldier, political animal—undermines this notion; such widely divergent life paths have nothing in common except their intersection at a seminar podium. The Boston Success '98 offers an even more incongruous mix, featuring ice-cream moguls Ben and Jerry side-by-side with trend-spotter Faith Popcorn and Cold Warrior Henry Kissinger (whose success strategies—"How to Strengthen your Diplomacy," "Methods of Expanding Your Circle of Influence"—all sound like euphemisms for low-intensity warfare). It is the job of Lowe and his fellow motivational experts to tease out the thread that weaves these disparate lives together. But while there is a consensus on what it means to be a success authority—you 1) used to be a salesman and 2) have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ—the question of what it means to be a success is trickier.

What is known for sure is that it involves listening to inspirational audiotapes during the daily commute. Lowe himself has developed a sideline of *Success Talk* tapes (\$4.95 per monthly installment) that pair interviews with role models like former British Prime Minister John Major with Lowe's

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